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THE

WORKS

OF

LAURENCE STERNE,

COMPLETE IN EIGHT VOLUMES.

CONTAINING

I. THE LIFE AND OPINIONS OF TRISTRAM SHANDY.
II. A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY THROUGH FRANCE AND ITALY, AND CONTINUATION.
III. SERMONS.—IV. LETTERS.
V. THE FRAGMENT.
VI. THE KORAN.
VII. HISTORY OF A GOOD WARM WATCH-COAT.

WITH

A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

VOL. V.

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PREFACE.

THE Sermon which gave riſe to the publication of theſe having been offered to the world as a Sermon of *Yorick's*, I hope the moſt ſerious reader will find nothing to offend him, in my continuing the volumes under the ſame title: leſt it ſhould be otherwiſe, I have added a ſecond title-page with the real name of the Author——the firſt will ſerve the bookſeller's purpoſe, as *Yorick's* name is poſſibly of the two the more known;——and the ſecond will eaſe the minds of thoſe who ſee a jeſt, and the danger which lurks under it, where no jeſt was meant.

I ſuppoſe it is needleſs to inform the Public, that the reaſon of printing theſe Sermons ariſes altogether from the favourable reception which the Sermon given as a ſample of them in TRISTRAM SHANDY met with from the world.——That Sermon was printed by itſelf ſome years ago, but could find neither purchaſers nor readers; ſo that I apprehended little hazard from a promiſe I made upon its republication, "That if the Sermon was liked, theſe ſhould be alſo at the world's ſervice; which, to be as good as my word, they here are; and I pray to GOD, they

may do it the ſervice I wiſh. I have little to ſay in their behalf, except this, that not one of them was compoſed with any thoughts of being printed;—— they have been haſtily written, and carry the marks of it along with them.——This may be no recommendation;——I mean it however as ſuch: for as the Sermons turn chiefly upon Philanthropy, and thoſe kindred virtues to it, upon which hang all the law and the prophets, I truſt they will be no leſs felt, or worſe received, for the evidence they bear, of proceeding more from the heart than the head. I have nothing to add, but that the reader, upon old and beaten ſubjects, muſt not look for many new thoughts——'tis well if he has new language: in three or four paſſages where he has neither the one nor the other, I have quoted the author I made free with.—There are ſome other paſſages, where I ſuſpect I may have taken the ſame liberty:——but 'tis only ſuſpicion, for I do not remember it is ſo, otherwiſe I ſhould have reſtored them to their proper owners; ſo that I put it here more as a general ſaying, than from a conſciouſneſs of having much to anſwer for upon that ſcore. In this, however, and every thing elſe which I offer, or ſhall offer to the world, I reſt, with a heart much at eaſe, upon the protection of the humane and candid, from whom I have received many favours, for which I beg leave to return them thanks——thanks.

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SERMONS

BY

LAURENCE STERNE, A. M.

PREBENDARY OF YORK,
AND VICAR OF SUTTON ON THE FOREST,
AND OF STILLINGTON NEAR YORK.

SERMON I.

Inquiry after Happineſs.

PSALM iv. 6.

There be many that ſay, Who will ſhow us any good?—Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

THE great purſuit of man is after happineſs: it is the firſt and ſtrongeſt deſire of his nature;—in every ſtage of his life, he ſearches for it as for hid treaſure;—courts it under a thouſand different ſhapes,—and, though perpetually diſappointed, ſtill perſiſts—runs after and inquires for it afreſh—aſks every paſſenger who comes in his way, *Who will ſhow him any good?*——who will aſſiſt him in the attainment of it, or direct him to the diſcovery of this great end of all his wiſhes?

He is told by one, to ſearch for it among the more gay and youthful pleaſures of life, in ſcenes of mirth and ſprightlineſs, where happineſs ever preſides, and is ever to be known by the joy and laughter which he will ſee at once painted in her looks.

A ſecond, with a graver aſpect, points out to the coſtly dwellings which pride and extravagance have erected—tells the inquirer, that the object he is in ſearch of inhabits there—that happineſs lives only in company with the great, in the midſt of much pomp

and outward ſtate. That he will eaſily find her out by the coat of many colours ſhe has on, and the great luxury and expence of equipage and furniture with which ſhe always ſits ſurrounded.

The miſer bleſſes God !——wonders how any one would miſlead, and wilfully put him upon ſo wrong a ſcent——convinces him that happineſs and extravagance never inhabited under the ſame roof——that if he would not be diſappointed in his ſearch, he muſt look into the plain and thrifty dwelling of the prudent man, who knows and underſtands the worth of money, and cautiouſly lays it up againſt an evil hour: that it is not the proſtitution of wealth upon the paſſions, or the parting with it at all, that conſtitutes happineſs—but that it is the keeping it together, and the *HAVING* and *HOLDING* it faſt to him and his heirs for ever, which are the chief attributes that form this great idol of human worſhip, to which ſo much incenſe is offered up every day.

The epicure, though he eaſily rectifies ſo groſs a miſtake, yet at the ſame time he plunges him, if poſſible, into a greater; for, hearing the object of his purſuit to be happineſs, and knowing of no other happineſs than what is ſeated immediately in his ſenſes, he ſends the inquirer there; tells him 'tis in vain to ſearch elſewhere for it, than where nature herſelf has placed it—in the indulgence and gratification of the appetites, which are given us for that end: and, in a word—if he will not take his opinion in the matter—he may truſt the word of a much wiſer man who has aſſured us—that there is nothing better in this world, than that a man ſhould eat and

drink, and rejoice in his works, and make his ſoul enjoy good in his labour——for that is his portion.

To reſcue him from this brutal experiment—ambition takes him by the hand and carries him into the world,——ſhows him all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them,—points out the many ways of advancing his fortune, and raiſing himſelf to honour, ——lays before his eyes all the charms and bewitching temptations of power, and aſks if there can be any happineſs in this world like that of being careſſed, courted, flattered, and followed?

To cloſe all—the philoſopher meets him buſtling in the full career of this purſuit——ſtops him——tells him, if he is in ſearch of happineſs, he is far gone out of his way.

That this deity has long been baniſhed from noiſe and tumults, where there was no reſt found for her, and was fled into ſolitude far from all commerce of the world; and, in a word, if he would find her, he muſt leave this buſy and intriguing ſcene, and go back to that peaceful ſcene of retirement and books, from which he firſt ſet out.

In this circle, too often, does a man run,——tries all experiments,—and generally ſits down, wearied and diſſatisfied with them all at laſt—in utter deſpair of ever accompliſhing what he wants—nor knowing what to truſt to after ſo many diſappointments; or where to lay the fault, whether in the incapacity of his own nature, or the inſufficiency of the enjoyments themſelves.

In this uncertain and perplexed ſtate—without knowledge which way to turn or where to betake

ourſelves for refuge——ſo often abuſed and deceived by the many who pretend thus to ſhow us any good —LORD! ſays the Pſalmiſt, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us. Send us ſome rays of thy grace and heavenly wiſdom, in this benighted ſearch after happineſs, to direct us ſafely to it. O GOD! let us not wander for ever without a guide, in this dark region, in endleſs purſuit of our miſtaken good, but enlighten our eyes that we ſleep not in death—— open to them the comforts of thy holy word and religion——lift up the light of thy countenance upon us,—and make us know the joy and ſatisfaction of living in the true faith and fear of Thee, which only can carry us to this haven of reſt where we would be——that ſure haven, where true joys are to be found, which will at length not only anſwer all our expectations——but ſatisfy the moſt unbounded of our wiſhes for ever and ever.

The words thus opened, naturally reduce the remaining part of the diſcourſe under two heads.—The firſt part of the verſe—" There be many that ſay, " Who will ſhow us any good?"——To make ſome reflections upon the inſufficiency of moſt of our enjoyments towards the attainment of happineſs, upon ſome of the moſt received plans on which 'tis generally ſought.

The examination of which will lead us up to the ſource, and true ſecret of all happineſs, ſuggeſted to us in the latter part of the verſe——" Lord! lift " thou up the light of thy countenance upon us"—— that there can be no real happineſs without religion and virtue, and the aſſiſtance of God's grace and

holy Spirit to direct our lives in the true purſuit of it.

Let us inquire into the diſappointments of human happineſs, on ſome of the moſt received plans of which 'tis generally ſought for and expected, by the bulk of mankind.

There is hardly any ſubject more exhauſted, or which at one time or other has afforded more matter for argument and declamation, than this one, of the inſufficiency of our enjoyments. Scarce a reformed ſenſualiſt, from Solomon down to our own days, who has not in ſome fits of repentance or diſappointment uttered ſome ſharp reflection upon the emptineſs of human pleaſure, and of the vanity of vanities which diſcovers itſelf in all the purſuits of mortal man.—— But the miſchief has been, that though ſo many good things have been ſaid, they have generally had the fate to be conſidered either as the overflowings of diſguſt from ſated appetites which could no longer reliſh the pleaſures of life, or as the declamatory opinions of recluſe and ſplenetic men who had never taſted them at all, and conſequently were thought no judges of the matter. So that 'tis no great wonder if the greateſt part of ſuch reflections, however juſt in themſelves, and founded on truth and a knowledge of the world, are found to leave little impreſſion where the imagination was already heated with great expectations of future happineſs; and that the beſt lectures that have been read upon the vanity of the world, ſo ſeldom ſtop a man in the purſuit of the object of his deſire, or give him half the conviction, that the poſſeſſion of it will, and what the experience

of his own life, or a careful obſervation upon the life of others, do at length generally confirm to us all.

Let us endeavour, then, to try the cauſe upon this iſſue; and inſtead of recurring to the common arguments, or taking any one's word in the caſe, let us truſt to matter of fact; and if, upon inquiry, it appears that the actions of mankind are not to be accounted for upon any other principle, but this of the inſufficiency of our enjoyments, 'twill go farther towards the eſtabliſhment of the truth of this part of the diſcourſe, than a thouſand ſpeculative arguments which might be offered upon the occaſion.

Now, if we take a ſurvey of the life of man from the time he is come to reaſon, to the lateſt decline of it in old age——we ſhall find him engaged, and generally hurried on in ſuch a ſucceſſion of different purſuits, and different opinions of things, through the different ſtages of his life——as will admit of no explication, but this, that he finds no reſt for the ſole of his foot, on any of the plans where he has been led to expect it.

The moment he is got looſe from tutors and governors, and is left to judge for himſelf, and purſue this ſcheme his own way—his firſt thoughts are generally full of the mighty happineſs which he is going to enter upon, from the free enjoyment of the pleaſures in which he ſees others of his age and fortune engaged.

In conſequence of this—take notice, how his imagination is caught by every glittering appearance that flatters this expectation.——Obſerve what impreſſions are made upon his ſenſes, by diverſions, muſic,

dreſs, and beauty—and how his ſpirits are upon the wing, flying in purſuit of them; that you would think he could never have enough.

Leave him to himſelf a few years, till the edge of appetite is worn down—and you will ſcarce know him again. You will find him entered into engagements, and ſetting up for a man of buſineſs and conduct, talking of no other happineſs but what centres in projects of making the moſt of this world, and providing for his children, and children's children after them. Examine his notions, he will tell you, that the gayer pleaſures of youth are only fit for thoſe who know not how to diſpoſe of themſelves and time to better advantage. That, however fair and promiſing they might appear to a man unpractiſed in them——they were no better than a life of folly and impertinence: and ſo far from anſwering your expectations of happineſs, 'twas well if you eſcaped without pain.——That, in every experiment he has tried, he had found more bitter than ſweet, and, for the little pleaſure one could ſnatch—it too often left a terrible ſting behind it: Beſides, did the balance lie on the other ſide, he would tell you, there could be no true ſatisfaction where a life runs on in ſo giddy a circle, out of which a wiſe man ſhould extricate himſelf as ſoon as he can, that he may begin to look forwards.——That it becomes a man of character and conſequence to lay aſide childiſh things, to take care of his intereſts, to eſtabliſh the fortune of his family, and place it out of want and dependence: and, in a word, if there is ſuch a thing as happineſs upon earth, it muſt conſiſt in the accompliſhment of this?

—and for his own part, if God ſhould proſper his endeavours ſo as to be worth ſuch a ſum, or to be able to bring ſuch point to bear—he ſhall be one of the happieſt of the ſons of men.—In full aſſurance of this, on he drudges—plots—contrives—riſes early—late takes reſt, and eats the bread of carefulneſs, till at length, by hard labour and perſeverance, he has reached if not outgone, the object he had firſt in view.—When he has got thus far—if he is a plain and ſincere man, he will make no ſcruple to acknowledge truly, what alteration he has found in himſelf. ——If you aſk him—he will tell you, that his imagination painted ſomething before his eyes, the reality of which he has not yet attained to: that with all the accumulations of his wealth, he neither lives the merrier, ſleeps the ſounder, or has leſs care and anxiety upon his ſpirits, than at his firſt ſetting out

Perhaps, you'll ſay, ſome dignity, honour, or title only is wanting—Oh! could I accompliſh that, as there would be nothing left then for me to wiſh, good God! how happy ſhould I be! 'Tis ſtill the ſame—the dignity or title—though they crown his head with honour—add not one cubit to his happineſs.——Upon ſumming up the account, all is found to be ſeated merely in the imagination.—The faſter he has purſued, the faſter the phantom fled before him;——and to uſe the Satiriſt's compariſon of the chariot wheels,——haſte as they will, they muſt for ever keep the ſame diſtance.

But what? though I have been thus far diſappointed in my expectations of happineſs from the poſſeſſion of riches—" Let me try whether I ſhall

" not meet with it in the ſpending and faſhionable " enjoyment of them."

Behold ! I will get me down, and make me great works, and build me houſes, and plant me vineyards, and make me gardens and pools of water. And I will get me ſervants and maidens, and whatſoever my eyes deſire, I will not keep from them.

In proſecution of this—he drops all gainful purſuits——withdraws himſelf from the buſy part of the world—realizes—pulls down—builds up again. Buys ſtatues,——pictures——plants and plucks up by the roots——levels mountains—and fills up valleys—turns rivers into dry ground, and dry ground into rivers.—Says unto this man, Go, and he goeth; and unto another, Do this and he doeth it; and whatſoever his ſoul luſteth after of this kind, he withholds not from it. When every thing is thus planned by himſelf, and executed according to his wiſh and direction, ſurely he is arrived to the accompliſhment of his wiſhes, and has got to the ſummit of all human happineſs !—Let the moſt fortunate adventurers in this way anſwer the queſtion for him, and ſay—how often it riſes higher than a bare and ſimple amuſement—and well, if you can compound for that—ſince 'ts often purchaſed at ſo high a price, and ſo foured by a mixture of other incidental vexations, as to become too often a work of repentance, which in the end will extort the ſame ſorrowful confeſſion from him, which it did from Solomon in the like caſe,—Lo ! I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do——and behold all was vanity and

vexation of ſpirit——and there was no profit to me under the ſun.

To inflame this account the more—it would be no miracle, if upon caſting it up he has gone farther lengths than he firſt intended, run into expences which have entangled his fortune, and brought himſelf into ſuch difficulties as to make way for the laſt experiment he can try—and that is, to turn miſer, with no happineſs in view but what is to riſe out of the little deſigns of a ſordid mind, ſet upon ſaving and ſcraping up all he has injudiciouſly ſpent.

In this laſt ſtage—behold him a poor trembling wretch, ſhut up from all mankind——ſinking into utter contempt; ſpending careful days and ſleepleſs nights in purſuit of what a narrow and contracted heart can never enjoy:—and let us here leave him to the conviction he will one day find—That there is no end of his labour—That his eyes will never be ſatisfied with riches, or will ſay—For whom do I labour and bereave myſelf of reſt? This is alſo a ſore travail.

I believe this is no uncommon picture of the diſappointments of human life—and the manner our pleaſures and enjoyments ſlip from under us in every ſtage of our life. And though I would not be thought by it, as if I was denying the reality of pleaſures, or diſputing the being of them, any more than one would the reality of pain—yet I muſt obſerve on this head, that there is a plain diſtinction to be made betwixt pleaſure and happineſs.—For though there can be no happineſs without pleaſure—yet the reverſe of the propoſiton will not hold true.—We are

ſo made, that from the common gratifications of our appetites, and the impreſſions of a thouſand objects, we ſnatch the one, like a tranſient gleam, without being ſuffered to taſte the other, and enjoy the perpetual ſun-ſhine and fair weather which conſtantly attend it. This, I contend, is only to be found in religion—in the conſciouſneſs of virtue——and the ſure and certain hopes of a better life, which brightens all our proſpects, and leaves no room to dread diſappointments——becauſe the expectation of it is built upon a rock, whoſe foundations are as deep as thoſe of heaven and hell.

And though in our pilgrimage through this world —ſome of us may be ſo fortunate as to meet with ſome clear fountains by the way, that may cool, for a few moments, the heat of this great thirſt of happineſs——yet our Saviour, who knew the world, though he enjoyed but little of it, tells us, that whoſoever drinketh of this water will thirſt again :—and we all find by experience it is ſo, and by reaſon that it always muſt be ſo.

I conclude with a ſhort obſervation upon Solomon's evidence in this caſe.

Never did the buſy brain of a lean and hectic chemiſt ſearch for the philoſopher's ſtone with more pains and ardour than this great man did after happineſs.—He was one of the wiſeſt inquirers into Nature—had tried all her powers and capacities, and after a thouſand vain ſpeculations and vile experiments, he affirmed at length, it lay hid in no one thing he had tried; like the chemiſts projections, all

had ended in ſmoke, or what was worſe, in vanity and vexation of ſpirit:—the concluſion of the whole matter was this—that he adviſes every man who would be happy, to fear God and keep his commandments.

SERMON II.

The Houſe of Feaſting and the Houſe of Mourning deſcribed.

ECCLESIASTES VII. 2, 3.

It is better to go to the houſe of mourning than to the houſe of feaſting.

THAT I deny—but let us hear the wiſe man's reaſoning upon it—*for that* is *the end of all men, and the living* will *lay it to* his *heart: ſorrow is better than laughter*——for a crack-brain'd order of Carthuſian monks, I grant, but not for men of the world: For what purpoſe, do you imagine, has God made us? for the ſocial ſweets of the well-water'd valleys where he has planted us, or for the dry and diſmal deſerts of a *Sierra Morena?* Are the ſad accidents of life, and the uncheery hours which perpetually overtake us, are they not enough, but we muſt ſally forth in queſt of them,—belie our own hearts, and ſay, as your text would have us, that they are better than thoſe of joy? Did the Beſt of Beings ſend us into the world for this end——to go weeping through it,—to vex and ſhorten a life ſhort and vexatious enough already? Do you think, my good preacher, that he who is infinitely happy, can envy us our enjoyments?

or that a being ſo infinitely kind would grudg
mournful traveller the ſhort reſt and refreſhm
neceſſary to ſupport his ſpirits through the ſtage
a weary pilgrimage? or that he would call him
ſevere reckoning, becauſe in this way he had hat
ſnatched at ſome little fugacious pleaſures, merel
ſweeten this uneaſy journey of life, and recon
him to the ruggedneſs of the road, and the m
hard juſtlings he is ſure to meet with? Conſide
beſeech you, what proviſion and accommodation
Author of our being has prepared for us, that
might not go on our way ſorrowing—how many
ravanſeras of reſt—what powers and faculties he
given us for taking it—what apt objects he has pla
in our way to entertain us;—ſome of which he
made ſo fair, ſo exquiſitely fitted for this end, t
they have power over us for a time to charm av
the ſenſe of pain, to cheer up the dejected heart
der poverty and ſickneſs, and make it go and
member its miſeries no more.

I will not contend at preſent againſt this rhetoi
I would chooſe rather for a moment to go on w
the allegory, and ſay we are travellers, and, in
moſt affecting ſenſe of that idea, that like travell
though upon buſineſs of the laſt and neareſt conc
to us, we may ſurely be allowed to amuſe ourſel
with the natural or artificial beauties of the coun
we are paſſing through, without reproach of forg
ting the main errand we are ſent upon; and if
can ſo order it as not to be led out of the way,
the variety of proſpects, edifices, and ruins wh

ſolicit us, it would be a nonſenſical piece of ſaint-errantry to ſhut our eyes.

But let us not loſe ſight of the argument in purſuit of the ſimile.

Let us remember, various as our excurſions are—that we have ſtill ſet our faces towards Jeruſalem—that we have a place of reſt and happineſs, towards which we haſten, and that the way to get there is not ſo much to pleaſe our hearts, as to improve them in virtue;——that mirth and feaſting are uſually no friends to achievements of this kind—but that a ſeaſon of affliction is in ſome ſort a ſeaſon of piety—not only becauſe our ſufferings are apt to put us in mind of our ſins, but that by the check and interruption which they give to our purſuits, they allow us what the hurry and buſtle of the world too often deny us,—and that is, a little time for reflection, which is all that moſt of us want to make us wiſer and better men;—that at certain times it is ſo neceſſary a man's mind ſhould be turned towards itſelf, that rather than want occaſions, he had better purchaſe them at the expence of his preſent happineſs.—He had better, as the text expreſſes it, *go to the houſe of mourning*, where he will meet with ſomething to ſubdue his paſſions, than to the houſe of feaſting, where the joy and gaiety of the place is likely to excite them: That whereas the entertainments and careſſes of the one place expoſe his heart, and lay it open to temptations——the ſorrows of the other defend it, and as naturally ſhut them from it. So ſtrange and unaccountable a creature is man! he is ſo framed, that he cannot but purſue happineſs—and yet unleſs he is

made ſometimes miſerable, how apt is he to miſtake the way which can only lead him to the accompliſhment of his own wiſhes!

This is the full force of the wiſe man's declaration.——But to do farther juſtice to his words, I will endeavour to bring the ſubject ſtill nearer.—For which purpoſe, it will be neceſſary to ſtop here, and take a tranſient view of the two places here referred to,—the houſe of mourning, and the houſe of feaſting. Give me leave, therefore, I beſeech you, to recal both of them for a moment, to your imaginations, that from thence I may appeal to your hearts, how faithfully, and upon what good grounds, the effects and natural operations of each upon our minds are intimated in the text.

And, firſt, let us look into the houſe of feaſting. And here, to be as fair and candid as poſſible in the deſcription of this, we will not take it from the worſt originals, ſuch as are opened merely for the ſale of virtue, and ſo calculated for the end, that the diſguiſe each is under, not only gives power ſafely to drive on the bargain, but ſafely to carry it into execution too.

This we will not ſuppoſe to be the caſe—nor let us even imagine the houſe of feaſting to be ſuch a ſcene of intemperance and exceſs, as the houſe of feaſting does often exhibit—but let us take it from one, as little exceptionable as we can—where there is, or at leaſt appears, nothing really criminal—but where every thing ſeems to be kept within the viſible bounds of moderation and ſobriety.

Imagine then ſuch a houſe of feaſting, where,

either by conſent or invitation, a number of each ſex is drawn together, for no other purpoſe but the enjoyment and mutual entertainment of each other, which we will ſuppoſe ſhall ariſe from no other pleaſures but what cuſtom authoriſes, and religion does not abſolutely forbid.

Before we enter——let us examine, what muſt be the ſentiments of each individual previous to his arrival, and we ſhall find, that however they may differ from one another in tempers and opinions, that every one ſeems to agree in this—that as he is going to a houſe dedicated to joy and mirth, it was fit he ſhould diveſt himſelf of whatever was likely to contradict that intention, or be inconſiſtent with it.—— That, for this purpoſe, he had left his cares—his ſerious thoughts—and his moral reflections behind him, and was come forth from home with only ſuch diſpoſitions and gaiety of heart as ſuited the occaſion, and promoted the intended mirth and jollity of the place. With this preparation of mind, which is as little as can be ſuppoſed, ſince it will amount to no more than a deſire in each to render himſelf an acceptable gueſt,—let us conceive them entering into the houſe of feaſting, with hearts ſet looſe from grave reſtraints, and open to the expectations of receiving pleaſure. It is not neceſſary, as I premiſed, to bring intemperance into this ſcene——or to ſuppoſe ſuch an exceſs in the gratification of the appetites, as ſhall ferment the blood and ſet the deſires in a flame:—Let us admit no more of it, therefore, than will gently ſtir them, and fit them for the impreſſions which ſo benevolent a commerce will naturally ex-

cite. In this diſpoſition, thus wrought upon before hand and already improved to this purpoſe,——take notice how mechanically the thoughts and ſpirits riſe ——how ſoon and inſenſibly they are got above the pitch and firſt bounds which cooler hours would have marked.

When the gay and ſmiling aſpect of things has begun to leave the paſſages to a man's heart thus thoughtleſsly unguarded——when kind and careſſing looks of every object without, that can flatter his ſenſes, have conſpired with the enemy within, to betray him, and put him off his defence,——when muſic likewiſe hath lent her aid, and tried her power upon the paſſions,—when the voice of ſinging men, and the voice of ſinging women, with the ſound of the viol and the lute, have broke in upon his ſoul, and in ſome tender notes have touched the ſecret ſprings of rapture—that moment let us diſſect and look into his heart,——ſee how vain! how weak! how empty a thing it is! Look through its ſeveral receſſes,—thoſe pure manſions formed for the reception of innocence and virtue ——ſad ſpectacle! Behold thoſe fair inhabitants now diſpoſſeſſed—turned out of their ſacred dwellings, to make room—for what?——at the beſt for levity and indiſcretion——perhaps for folly—it may be for more impure gueſts, which poſſibly in ſo general a riot of the mind and ſenſes, may take occaſion to enter unſuſpected at the ſame time.

In a ſcene and diſpoſition thus deſcribed—can the moſt cautious ſay—thus far ſhall my deſires go——and no farther! or will the cooleſt and moſt cir-

cumſpect ſay, when pleaſure has taken full poſſeſſion of his heart, that no thought nor purpoſe ſhall ariſe there, which he would have concealed!——In thoſe looſe and unguarded moments the imagination is not always at command—in ſpite of reaſon and reflection, it will forcibly carry him ſometimes whither he would not—like the unclean ſpirit, in the parent's ſad deſcription of his child's caſe, which took him, and oft-times caſt him into the fire to deſtroy him, and whereſoever it taketh him it teareth him, and hardly departeth from him.

But this you'll ſay, is the worſt recount of what the mind may ſuffer here.

Why may we not make more favourable ſuppoſitions?—that numbers, by exerciſe and cuſtom to ſuch encounters, learn gradually to deſpiſe and triumph over them;——that the minds of many are not ſo ſuſceptible of warm impreſſions, or ſo badly fortified againſt them, that pleaſure ſhould eaſily corrupt or ſoften them;—that it would be hard to ſuppoſe, of the great multitudes which daily throng and preſs into this houſe of feaſting, but that numbers come out of it again, with all the innocence with which they entered; and that if both ſexes are included in the computation, what *fair* examples ſhall we ſee of many of ſo pure and chaſte a turn of mind—that the houſe of feaſting, with all its charms and temptations, was never able to excite a thought, or awaken an inclination which virtue need to bluſh at—or which the moſt ſcrupulous conſcience might not ſupport. God forbid we ſhonld ſay otherwiſe: —No doubt, numbers of all ages eſcape unhurt, and

get off this dangerous ſea without ſhipwreck. Yet are they not to be reckoned amongſt the more fortunate adventurers;——and though one would not abſolutely prohibit the attempt, or be ſo cynical as to condemn every one who tries it, ſince there are ſo many, I ſuppoſe, who cannot well do otherwiſe, and whoſe condition and ſituation in life unavoidably force them upon it—yet we may be allowed to deſcribe this fair and flattering coaſt—we may point out the unſuſpected dangers of it, and warn the unwary paſſenger where they lie. We may ſhow him what hazards his youth and inexperience will run, how little he can gain by the venture, and how much wiſer and better it would be (as is implied in the text) to ſeek occaſions rather to improve his little ſtock of virtue, than incautiouſly expoſe it to ſo unequal a chance, where the beſt he can hope is to return ſafe with what treaſure he carried out——but where, probably, he may be ſo unfortunate as to loſe it all—be loſt himſelf, and undone for ever.

Thus much for the houſe of feaſting; which, by the way, though generally open at other times of the year throughout the world, is ſuppoſed, in Chriſtian countries, now every where to be univerſally ſhut up. And, in truth, I have been more full in my cautions againſt it, not only as reaſon requires,—but in reverence to this ſeaſon *, wherein our church exacts a more particular forbearance and ſelf-denial in this point, and thereby adds to the reſtraints upon pleaſure and entertainments which this repreſentation of things has ſuggeſted againſt them already.

* Preached in *Lent*.

Here, then, let us turn aſide from this gay ſcene, and ſuffer me to take you with me for a moment to one much fitter for your meditation. Let us go into the houſe of mourning, made ſo by ſuch afflictions as have been brought in, merely by the common croſs-accidents and diſaſters to which our condition is expoſed—where, perhaps, the aged parents ſit broken-hearted, pierced to their ſouls with the folly and indiſcretion of a thankleſs child——the child of their prayers, in whom all their hopes and expectations centered:—perhaps a more affecting ſcene—a virtuous family lying pinched with want, where the unfortunate ſupport of it having long ſtruggled with a train of misfortunes, and bravely fought up againſt them—is now piteouſly borne down at the laſt—overwhelmed with a cruel blow which no forecaſt or frugality could have prevented.——O God! look upon his afflictions—Behold him diſtracted with many ſorrows, ſurrounded with the tender pledges of his love, and the partner of his cares——without bread to give them: unable, from the remembrance of better days, to dig;—to beg, aſhamed.

When we enter into the houſe of mourning ſuch as this—it is impoſſible to inſult the unfortunate even with an improper look——Under whatever levity and diſſipation of heart ſuch objects catch our eyes, they catch likewiſe our attentions, collect and call home our ſcatter'd thoughts, and exerciſe them with wiſdom. A tranſient ſcene of diſtreſs, ſuch as is here ſketched, how ſoon does it furniſh materials to ſet the mind at work? how neceſſarily does it engage it to the conſideration of the miſeries and misfortunes, the dangers and calamities to which the life of man is

ſubject? By holding up ſuch a glaſs before it, it forces the mind to ſee and reflect upon the vanity—the periſhing condition and uncertain tenure of every thing in the world. From reflections of this ſerious caſt, how inſenſibly do the thoughts carry us farther—and, from conſidering, what we are—what kind of world we live in—and what evils befal us in it, how naturally do they ſet us to look forwards at what poſſibly we ſhall be?—for what kind of world we are intended—what evils may befal us there—and what proviſion we ſhould make againſt them here, whilſt we have time and opportunity.

If theſe leſſons are ſo inſeparable from the houſe of mourning here ſuppoſed—we ſhall find it a ſtill more inſtructive ſchool of wiſdom, when we take a view of the place in that more affecting light in which the wiſe man ſeems to confine it in the text, in which, by the houſe of mourning, I believe he means that particular ſcene of ſorrow, where there is lamentation and mourning for the dead.

Turn in hither, I beſeech you, for a moment. Behold a dead man ready to be carried out, the only ſon of his mother, and ſhe a widow. Perhaps a more affecting ſpectacle—a kind and indulgent father of a numerous family lies breathleſs—ſnatched away in the ſtrength of his age—torn in an evil hour from his children and the boſom of a diſconſolate wife.

Behold much people of the city gathered together, to mix their tears, with ſettled ſorrow in their looks, going heavily along to the houſe of mourning, to perform that laſt melancholy office, which, when the debt of nature is paid, we are called upon to pay to each other.

If this ſad occaſion which leads him there, has not done it already, take notice, to what a ſerious and devout frame of mind every man is reduced, the moment he enters this gate of affliction. The buſy and fluttering ſpirits, which in the houſe of mirth were wont to tranſport him from one diverting object to another——ſee how they are fallen! how peaceably they are laid! In this gloomy manſion, full of ſhades and uncomfortable damps to ſeize the ſoul—ſee, the light and eaſy heart, which never knew what it was to think before, how penſive it is now, how ſoft, how ſuſceptible, how full of religious impreſſions, how deeply it is ſmitten with ſenſe and with a love of virtue. Could we, in this criſis, whilſt this empire of reaſon and religion laſts, and the heart is thus exerciſed with wiſdom, and buſied with heavenly contemplations—could we ſee it naked as it is——ſtripped of its paſſions, unſpotted by the world, and regardleſs of its pleaſures——we might then ſafely reſt our cauſe upon this ſingle evidence, and appeal to the moſt ſenſual, whether Solomon has not made a juſt determination here, in favour of the houſe of mourning?—not for its own ſake, but as it is fruitful in virtue, and becomes the occaſion of ſo much good. Without this end, ſorrow I own, has no uſe but to ſhorten a man's days—nor can gravity, with all its ſtudied ſolemnity of look and carriage, ſerve any end but to make one half of the world merry, and impoſe upon the other.

Conſider what has been ſaid; and may God of his mercy bleſs you! Amen.

SERMON III.

Philanthropy recommended.

LUKE X. 36, 37.

Which now of theſe three thinkeſt thou, was neighbour unto h
that fell among the thieves?——And he ſaid, He that ſhow
mercy on him. Then ſaid Jeſus unto him——Go, and do th
likewiſe.

IN the foregoing verſes of this chapter, the Evangeliſt relates, that a certain lawyer ſtood up an tempted JESUS, ſaying, Maſter, what ſhall I do inherit eternal life?——To which inquiry our SAVIOUR, as his manner was, when any enſnarin queſtion was put to him, which he ſaw proceed more from a deſign to entangle him, than an hone view of getting information——inſtead of giving direct anſwer, which might afford a handle to malic or at beſt ſerve only to gratify an impertinent humou——he immediately retorts the queſtion upon the ma who aſked it, and unavoidably puts him upon th neceſſity of anſwering himſelf;—and as, in the pre ſent caſe, the particular profeſſion of the inquire and his ſuppoſed general knowledge of all othe branches of learning, left no room to ſuſpect h could be ignorant of the true anſwer to this queſtion

especially of what every one knew was delivered
that head by their great Legiſlator, our Saviour
fore refers him to his own memory of what he
found there in the courſe of his ſtudies.——
t is written in the law, how readeſt thou?—
which the inquirer reciting the general heads
ur duty to GOD and MAN, as delivered in the
of Leviticus and the 6th of Deuteronomy,——
ly—*That we ſhould worſhip the Lord our God*
all our hearts, and love our neighbour as ourſelves;
bleſſed SAVIOUR tells him, he had anſwered
, and if he followed that leſſon, he could not
f the bleſſing he ſeemed deſirous to inherit.—
do, and thou ſhalt live.
it he, as the context tells us, willing to juſtify
elf—willing poſſibly to gain more credit in the
rence, or hoping perhaps to hear ſuch a partial
narrow definition of the word *neighbour*, as
d ſuit his own principles, and juſtify ſome par-
ir oppreſſions of his own, or thoſe of which his
e order lay under an accuſation——ſays unto
s in the 29th verſe—*And who is my neighbour?*
gh the demand at firſt ſight may ſeem utterly
g, yet was it far from being ſo in fact. For
liug as you underſtood the term in a more or
eſtrained ſenſe——it produced many neceſſary
ions in the duties you owed from that relation.—
leſſed SAVIOUR, to rectify any partial and per-
s miſtake in this matter, and to place at once
uty of the love of our neighbour upon its true
n of philanthropy and univerſal kindneſs, makes
r to the propoſed queſtion, not by any far-

fetched refinement from the ſchools of the Rabbies, which might have ſooner ſilenced than convinced the man—but by a direct appeal to human nature in an inſtance he relates of a man falling amongſt thieves, left in the greateſt diſtreſs imaginable, till by chance a Samaritan, an utter ſtranger, coming where he was, by an act of great goodneſs and compaſſion, not only relieved him at preſent, but took him under his protection, and generouſly provided for his future ſafety.

On the cloſe of which engaging account—our SAVIOUR appeals to the man's own heart in the firſt verſe of the text——*Which now of theſe three, thinkeſt thou, was neighbour unto him that fell amongſt the thieves?* and, inſtead of drawing the inference himſelf, leaves him to decide in favour of ſo noble a principle ſo evidently founded in mercy.——The lawyer, ſtruck with the truth and juſtice of the doctrine, and frankly acknowledged the force of it, our bleſſed SAVIOUR concludes the debate with a ſhort admonition, that he would practiſe what he had approved,—and go, and imitate that fair example of univerſal benevolence which it had ſet before him.

In the remaining part of the diſcourſe I ſhall follow the ſame plan; and therefore ſhall beg leave to enlarge firſt upon the ſtory itſelf, with ſuch reflections as will ariſe from it; and conclude, as our SAVIOUR has done, with the ſame exhortation to kindneſs and humanity which naturally falls from it.

A certain man, ſays our SAVIOUR, went down from Jeruſalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who ſtripped him of his raiment, and departed, leav-

im half-dead. There is ſomething in our na-
which engages us to take part in every accident
hich man is ſubject from what cauſe ſoever it
have happened: but in ſuch calamities as a man
allen into through mere misfortune, to be
ed upon no fault or indiſcretion of himſelf,
s ſomething then ſo truly intereſting, that at the
ight we generally make them our own, not al-
her from a reflection that they might have been,
ay be ſo, but oftener from a certain generoſity
enderneſs of nature which diſpoſes us for com-
n, abſtracted from all conſiderations of ſelf: ſo
without any obſervable act of the will, we ſuffer
the unfortunate, and feel a weight upon our
s, we know not why, on ſeeing the moſt com-
inſtances of their diſtreſs. But where the
cle is uncommonly tragical, and complicated
many circumſtances of miſery, the mind is then
captive at once, and *were* it inclined to it, has
wer to make reſiſtance, but ſurrenders itſelf to
e tender emotions of pity and deep concern.
hat when one conſiders this friendly part of our
e without looking farther, one would think it
ſible for a man to look upon miſery without
g himſelf in ſome meaſure attached to the in-
-of him who ſuffers it——I ſay, one would
it impoſſible——for there are ſome tempers
w ſhall I deſcribe them?——formed either of
impenetrable matter, or wrought up by habitual
neſs to ſuch an utter inſenſibility of what be-
of the fortunes of their fellow-creatures, as [illegible]

they were not partakers of the ſame nature, or had no lot or connection at all with the ſpecies.

Of this character, our SAVIOUR produces two diſgraceful inſtances in the behaviour of a Prieſt and a Levite, whom in this account he repreſents as coming to the place where the unhappy man was;—both paſſing by without either ſtretching forth a hand to aſſiſt, or uttering a word to comfort him in his diſtreſs.

And by chance there came down a certain prieſt —Merciful God! that a teacher of thy religion ſhould ever want humanity—or that a man whoſe head might be thought full of the one, ſhould have heart void of the other! This however was the caſe before us——and though in theory one would ſcarce ſuſpect that the leaſt pretence to religion, and an open diſregard to ſo main a part of it, could ever meet together in one perſon; yet in fact it is no fictitious character.

Look into the world——how often do you behold a ſordid wretch, whoſe ſtrait heart is open to no man's affliction, taking ſhelter behind an appearance of piety, and putting on the garb of religion, which none but the merciful and compaſſionate have a title to wear. Take notice with what ſanctity he goes the end of his days, in the ſame ſelfiſh tract in which he at firſt ſet out——turning neither to the right hand nor to the left—but plods on—pores all his life long upon the ground, as if afraid to look up, leſt peradventure he ſhould ſee aught which might turn him one moment out of that ſtraight line where intereſt is carrying him;—or if, by chance, he ſtumbles upon

a hapleſs object of diſtreſs, which threatens ſuch a diſaſter to him—like the man here repreſented, *devoutly* paſſing by on the other ſide, as if unwilling to truſt himſelf to the impreſſions of nature, or hazard the inconveniences which pity might lead him into upon the occaſion.

There is but one ſtroke wanting in this picture of an unmerciful man to render the character utterly odious, and that our SAVIOUR gives it in the following inſtance he relates upon it. And likewiſe, ſays he, *A Levite when he was at the place, came and looked at him.* It was not a tranſient overſight, the haſty or ill-adviſed neglect of an unconſidering humour, with which the beſt diſpoſed are ſometimes overtaken, and led on beyond the point where otherwiſe they would have wiſhed to ſtop——No!—on the contrary, it had all the aggravation of a deliberate act of inſenſibility proceeding from a bad heart. When he was at the place, he came and looked at him,—conſidered his misfortunes, gave time for reaſon and nature to have awoke—ſaw the imminent danger he was in—and the preſſing neceſſity of immediate help, which ſo violent a caſe called aloud for; and after all——turned aſide, and unmercifully left him to all the diſtreſſes of his condition.

In all unmerciful actions the worſt of men pay this compliment at leaſt to humanity, as to endeavour to wear as much of the appearance of it, as the caſe will well let them;—ſo that in the hardeſt acts a man ſhall be guilty of, he has ſome motives, true or falſe, always ready to offer, either to ſatisfy himſelf or the world, and, God knows, too often to im poſeboth

upon the one and the other. And therefore it would be no hard matter here to give a probable guefs at what paſſed in the Levite's mind in the preſent caſe, and ſhew, was it neceſſary, by what kind of caſuiſtry he ſettled the matter with his conſcience as he paſſed by, and guarded all the paſſages to his heart againſt the inroads which pity might attempt to make upon the occaſion.—But it is painful to dwell long upon this diſagreeable part of the ſtory; I therefore haſten to the concluding incident of it, which is ſo amiable, that one cannot eaſily be too copious in reflections upon it.—And behold, ſays our SAVIOUR, a certain Samaritan as he journeyed came where he was; and when he ſaw him he had compaſſion on him—and went to him—bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine—ſet him upon his own beaſt, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. I ſuppoſe, it will be ſcarce neceſſary here to remind you that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans.—An old religious grudge—the worſt of all grudges, had wrought ſuch a diſlike between both people, that they held themſelves mutually diſcharged not only from all offices of friendſhip and kindneſs, but even from the moſt common acts of courteſy and good manners. This operated ſo ſtrongly in our SAVIOUR'S time, that the woman of Samaria ſeemed aſtoniſhed that he, being a Jew, ſhould *aſk* water of her who was a Samaritan;—ſo that with ſuch a prepoſſeſſion, however diſtreſsful the caſe of the unfortunate man was, and how reaſonably ſoever he might plead for pity from another man, there was little aid or conſolation to be looked for from ſo unpromiſing a quarter.

Alas! after I have been twice paſſed by, neglected by men of my own nation and religion, bound by ſo many ties to aſſiſt me, left here friendleſs and unpitied both by a Prieſt and a Levite, men whoſe profeſſion and ſuperior advantages of knowledge, could not leave them in the dark in what manner they ſhould diſcharge this debt which my condition claims——after this what hopes! what expectations from a paſſenger, not only a ſtranger but a Samaritan, releaſed from all obligations to me, and by a national diſlike inflamed by mutual ill offices, now made my enemy, and more likely to rejoice at the evils which have fallen upon me, than to ſtretch forth a hand to ſave me from them!

'Tis no unnatural ſoliloquy to imagine; but the actions of generous and compaſſionate tempers baffle all little reaſonings about them.——True charity, in the Apoſtle's deſcription, as it is kind, and is not eaſily provoked, ſo it manifeſted this character here; —for we find when he came where he was, and beheld his diſtreſs—all the unfriendly paſſions, which at another time might have roſe within him, now utterly forſook him and fled: when he ſaw his misfortunes—he forgot his enmity towards the man,— dropped all the prejudices which education had planted againſt him, and in the room of them, all that was good and compaſſionate was ſuffered to ſpeak in his behalf.

In benevolent natures the impulſe to pity is ſo ſudden, that like inſtruments of muſic which obey the touch——the objects which are fitted to excite ſuch impreſſions work ſo inſtantaneous an effect, that you would think the will was ſcarce concerned, and that

the mind was altogether paſſive in the ſympathy which her own goodneſs has excited. The truth is ——the ſoul is generally in ſuch caſes ſo buſily taken up and wholly engroſſed by the object of pity, that ſhe does not attend to her own operations, or take leiſure to examine the principles upon which ſhe acts. So that the Samaritan, though the moment he ſaw him he had compaſſion on him, yet, ſudden as the emotion is repreſented, you are not to imagine that it was mechanical, but that there was a ſettled principle of humanity and goodneſs which operated within him, and influenced not only the firſt impulſe of kindneſs, but the continuation of it throughout the reſt of ſo engaging a behaviour. And becauſe it is a pleaſure to look into a good mind, and trace out as far as one is able, what paſſes within it on ſuch occaſions, I ſhall beg leave for a moment to ſtate an account of what was likely to paſs in his, and in what manner ſo diſtreſsful a caſe would neceſſarily work upon ſuch a diſpoſition.

As he approached the place where the unfortunate man lay, the inſtant he beheld him, no doubt ſome ſuch train of reflections as this would riſe in his mind: "Good God! what a ſpectacle of miſery do "I behold!——a man ſtripped of his raiment—— "wounded——lying languiſhing before me upon "the ground, juſt ready to expire, without the "comfort of a friend to ſupport him in his laſt "agonies, or the proſpect of a hand to cloſe his eyes "when his pains are over. But perhaps my concern "ſhould leſſen, when I reflect on the relations in "which we ſtand to each other—that he is a Jew,

" and I a Samaritan.—But are we not ſtill both men ;
" partakers of the ſame nature— and ſubject to the
" ſame evils !——Let me change conditions with
" him for a moment, and conſider, had his lot be-
" fallen me as I journeyed in the way, what mea-
" ſure I ſhould have expected at his hand.—Should
" I wiſh, when he beheld me wounded and half-
" dead, that he ſhould ſhut up his bowels of com-
" paſſion from me, and double the weight of my
" miſeries by paſſing by and leaving them unpitied?
" But I am a ſtranger to the man ;——be it ſo——
" but I am no ſtranger to his condition——misfor-
" tunes are of no particular tribe or nation, but be-
" long to us all ; and have a general claim upon us,
" without diſtinction of climate, country, or reli-
" gion. Beſides, though I am a ſtranger——'tis no
" fault of his that I do not know him, and therefore
" unequitable he ſhould ſuffer by it :—Had I known
" him poſſibly I ſhould have had cauſe to love and
" pity him the more—For aught I know, he is ſome
" one of uncommon merit, whoſe life is rendered
" ſtill more precious, as the lives and happineſs of
" others may be involved in it : perhaps at this in-
" ſtant that he lies here forſaken, in all this miſery,
" a whole virtuous family is joyfully looking for his
" return, and affectionately counting the hours of
" his delay. Oh ! did they know what evil had
" befallen him——how would they fly to ſuccour
" him !——Let me then haſten to ſupply thoſe ten-
" der offices of binding up his wounds, and carry-
" ing him to a place of ſafety——or, if that aſſiſt-
" ance comes too late, I ſhall comfort him at leaſt

" in his laſt hour——and, if I can do nothing elſe,
" ——I ſhall ſoften his misfortunes by dropping a
" tear of pity over them."

'Tis almoſt neceſſary to imagine the good Samaritan was influenced by ſome ſuch thoughts as theſe, from the uncommon generoſity of his behaviour, which is repreſented by our SAVIOUR operating like the warm zeal of a brother, mixed with the affectionate diſcretion and care of a parent, who was not ſatisfied with taking him under his protection, and ſupplying his preſent wants, but in looking forwards for him, and taking care that his wants ſhould be ſupplied when he ſhould be gone, and no longer near to befriend him.

I think there needs no ſtronger argument to prove how univerſally and deeply the ſeeds of this virtue of compaſſion are planted in the heart of man, than in the pleaſure we take in ſuch repreſentations of it; and though ſome men have repreſented human nature in other colours (though to what end I know not), yet the matter of fact is ſo ſtrong againſt them, that from the general propenſity to pity the unfortunate, we expreſs that ſenſation by the word *humanity*, as if it was inſeparable from our nature. That it is not *inſeparable*, I have allowed in the former part of this diſcourſe, from ſome reproachful inſtances of ſelfiſh tempers, which ſeem to take part in nothing beyond themſelves: yet I am perſuaded, and affirm 'tis ſtill ſo great and noble a part of our nature, that a man muſt do great violence to himſelf, and ſuffer many a painful conflict, before he has brought himſelf to a different diſpoſition.

'Tis obſervable in the foregoing account, that when the prieſt came to the place where he was, he paſſed by on the other ſide——He might have paſſed by, you'll ſay, without turning aſide.——No, there is a ſecret ſhame which attends every act of inhumanity, not to be conquered in the hardeſt natures; ſo that, as in other caſes, ſo eſpecially in this, many a man will do a cruel act, who at the ſame time will bluſh to look you in the face, and is forced to turn aſide before he can have a heart to execute his purpoſe.

Inconſiſtent creature that man is! who at that inſtant that he does what is wrong, is not able to withhold his teſtimony to what is good and praiſeworthy.

I have now done with the parable, which was the firſt part propoſed to be conſidered in this diſcourſe; and ſhould proceed to the ſecond, which ſo naturally falls from it, of exhorting you, as our SAVIOUR did the lawyer upon it, *to go and do ſo likewiſe*; but I have been ſo copious in my reflections upon the ſtory itſelf, that I find I have inſenſibly incorporated into them almoſt all that I ſhould have ſaid here in recommending ſo amiable an example; by which means I have unawares anticipated the taſk I propoſed. I ſhall therefore detain you no longer than with a ſingle remark upon the ſubject in general, which is this: 'Tis obſervable in many places of ſcripture, that our bleſſed SAVIOUR, in deſcribing the day of judgment, does it in ſuch a manner, as if the great inquiry then, was to relate principally to this one virtue of compaſſion——and as if our final ſentence at that ſolemnity was to be pronounced exactly according to

the degrees of it. " I was a hungered and ye gave " me meat—thirſty, and ye gave me drink—naked, " and ye clothed me—I was ſick, and ye viſited me " —in priſon and ye came unto me." Not that we are to imagine from thence, as if any other good or evil action ſhould then be overlooked by the eye of the All-ſeeing Judge, but barely to intimate to us, that a charitable and benevolent diſpoſition is ſo principal and ruling a part of a man's character, as to be a conſiderable teſt, by itſelf, of the whole frame and temper of his mind, with which all other virtues and vices reſpectively riſe and fall, and will almoſt neceſſarily be connected——Tell me therefore of a compaſſionate man, you repreſent to me a man of a thouſand other good qualities——on whom I can depend—whom I may ſafely truſt with my wife—my children, my fortune and reputation—'Tis for this, as the Apoſtle argues from the ſame principle—— " that he will not commit adultery—that he will not " kill—that he will not ſteal—that he will not bear " falſe witneſs." That is, the ſorrows which are ſtirred up in men's hearts by ſuch treſpaſſes, are ſo tenderly felt by a compaſſionate man, that it is not in his power or his nature to commit them.

So that well might he conclude, that charity, by which he means the love to your neighbour, was the end of the commandment, and that whoſoever fulfilled it, had fulfilled the law.

Now to God, &c. Amen.

SERMON IV.

Self-Knowledge.

2 SAMUEL XII. 7. 1ſt part.

And Nathan ſaid unto David, Thou art the man.

THERE is no hiſtorical paſſage in ſcripture which gives a more remarkable inſtance of the deceitfulneſs of the heart of man to itſelf, and of how little we truly know of ourſelves, than this; wherein David is convicted out of his own mouth, and is led by the prophet to condemn and pronounce a ſevere judgment upon another, for an act of injuſtice, which he had paſſed over in himſelf, and poſſibly reconciled to his own conſcience. To know one's ſelf, one would think, could be no very difficult leſſon:—for who, you'll ſay, can well be truly ignorant of himſelf and the true diſpoſition of his own heart? If a man thinks at all, he cannot be a ſtranger to what paſſes there——he muſt be conſcious of his own thoughts and deſires, he muſt remember his paſt purſuits, and the true ſprings and motives which in general have directed the actions of his life: he may hang out falſe colours and deceive the world, but how can a man deceive himſelf? That a man can—

is evident, becauſe he daily does ſo.—Scripture tells us, and gives us many hiſtorical proofs of it, beſides this to which the text refers——" That the heart of " man is treacherous to itſelf, and *deceitful above all* " *things* ;" and experience and every hour's commerce with the world confirms the truth of this ſeeming paradox, " That though man is the only " creature endowed with reflection, and conſequent- " ly qualified to know the moſt of himſelf,—yet ſo " it happens, that he generally knows the leaſt—— " and, with all the power which God has given him " of turning his eyes inward upon himſelf, and tak- " ing notice of the chain of his own thoughts and " deſires—yet, in fact, is generally ſo inattentive, " but always ſo partial an obſerver of what paſſes, " that he is as much, nay often, a much greater " ſtranger to his own diſpoſition and true character, " than all the world beſides."

By what means he is brought under ſo manifeſt a deluſion, and how he ſuffers himſelf to be ſo groſsly impoſed upon in a point in which he is capable of knowing ſo much better than others, is not hard to give an account of; nor need we ſeek farther for it, than amongſt the cauſes which are every day perverting his reaſon, and miſleading him. We are deceived in judging of ourſelves, juſt as we are in judging of other things, when our paſſions and inclinations are called in as counſellors ; and we ſuffer ourſelves to ſee and reaſon juſt ſo far and no farther than they give us leave. How hard do we find it to paſs an equitable and ſound judgment in a matter where our intereſt is deeply concerned !——and even

where there is the remoteſt conſideration of ſelf, connected with the point before us, what a ſtrange bias does it hang upon our minds, and how difficult is it to diſengage our judgments entirely from it! with what reluctance are we brought to think evil of a friend whom we have long loved and eſteemed? and though there happens to be ſtrong appearances againſt him how apt are we to overlook or put favourable conſtructions upon them, and even ſometimes, when our zeal and friendſhip tranſport us, to aſſign the beſt and kindeſt motives for the worſt and moſt unjuſtifiable parts of his conduct!

We are ſtill worſe caſuiſts, and the deceit is proportionably ſtronger with a man, when he is going to judge of himſelf——that deareſt of all parties,——ſo cloſely connected with him—ſo much and ſo long beloved——of whom he has ſo early conceived the higheſt opinion and eſteem, and with whoſe merit he has all along, no doubt, found ſo much reaſon to be contented. It is not an eaſy matter to be ſevere, where there is ſuch an impulſe to be kind, or to efface at once all the tender impreſſions in favour of ſo old a friend, which diſabled us from thinking of him as he is, and ſeeing him in the light, may be, in which every one elſe ſees him.

So that however eaſy this knowldge of one's ſelf may appear at firſt ſight, it is otherwiſe when we come to examine; ſince not only in practice, but even in ſpeculation and theory, we find it one of the hardeſt and moſt painful leſſons. Some of the earlieſt inſtructors of mankind, no doubt, found it ſo too; and for that reaſon, ſoon ſaw the neceſſity of laying

ſuch a ſtreſs upon this great precept of ſelf-knowledge, which, for its excellent wiſdom and uſefulneſs, many of them ſuppoſed to be a divine direction; that it came down from Heaven, and comprehended the whole circle both of the knowledge and the duty of man. And indeed their zeal might eaſily be allowed in ſo high an encomium upon the attainment of a virtue, the want of which ſo often baffled their inſtructions, and rendered their endeavours of reforming the heart vain and uſeleſs. For who could think of a reformation of the faults within him, who knew not where they lay, or could ſet about correcting, till he had firſt come to a ſenſe of the defects which required it?

But this was a point always much eaſier recommended by public inſtructors, than ſhown how to be put in practice: and therefore others, who equally ſought the reformation of mankind, obſerving, that this direct road which led to it was guarded on all ſides by ſelf-love, and conſequently very difficult to open acceſs, ſoon found out that a different and more artful courſe was requiſite: as they had not ſtrength to remove this flattering paſſion which ſtood in their way, and blocked up all the paſſages to the heart, they endeavoured by ſtratagem to get beyond it, and by a ſkilful addreſs, if poſſible, to deceive it. This gave riſe to the early manner of conveying their inſtructions in parables, fables, and ſuch ſort of indirect applications, which, though they could not conquer this principle of ſelf-love, yet often laid it aſleep, or at leaſt over-reached it for a few moments till a juſt judgment could be procured.

The prophet Nathan ſeems to have been a great maſter in this way of addreſs. David had greatly diſpleaſed God by two grievous ſins which he had committted, and the prophet's commiſſion was, to go and bring him to a conviction of them, and touch his heart with a ſenſe of guilt for what he had done againſt the honour and life of Uriah.

The holy man knew, that was it any one's caſe but David's own, no man would have been ſo quick-ſighted in diſcerning the nature of the injury,—— more ready to have redreſſed it, or who would have felt more compaſſion for the party who had ſuffered it, than he himſelf.

Inſtead therefore of declaring the real intention of his errand, by a direct accuſation and reproof for the crimes he had committed; he comes to him with a fictitious complaint of a cruel act of injuſtice done by another: and accordingly he frames a caſe, not ſo parallel to David's as he ſuppoſed would awaken his ſuſpicion, and prevent a patient and candid hearing, and yet not ſo void of reſemblance in the main circumſtances, as to fail of ſtriking him when ſhown in a proper light.

And Nathan came and ſaid unto him, "There "were two men in one city, the one rich and the "other poor——the rich man had exceeding many "flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing "ſave one little ewe-lamb which he had bought and "nouriſhed up——and it grew up together with "him and with his children——it did eat of his "own meat, and drink of his own cup, and lay in "his boſom, and was unto him as a daughter——

" and there came a traveller unto the rich man, and " he ſpared to take of his own flock, and of his own " herd to dreſs for the wayfaring man that was come " unto him, but took the poor man's lamb and dreſ- " ſed it for the man that was come unto him."

The caſe was drawn up with great judgment and beauty,——the ſeveral minute circumſtances which heightened the injury truly affecting,——and ſo ſtrongly urged, that it would have been impoſſible for any man with a previous ſenſe of guilt upon his mind, to have defended himſelf from ſome degree of remorſe, which it muſt naturally have excited.

The ſtory, though it ſpoke only of the injuſtice and oppreſſive act of another man——yet it pointed to what he had lately done himſelf, with all the circumſtances of its aggravation;——and withal, the whole was ſo tenderly addreſſed to the heart and paſſions, as to kindle at once the utmoſt horror and indignation. And ſo it did,—but not againſt the proper perſon. In his tranſport he forgot himſelf;—his anger geatly kindled againſt the man,—and he ſaid unto Nathan, " As the LORD liveth, the " man that hath done this thing ſhall ſurely die, " and he ſhall reſtore the lamb fourfold, becauſe he " did this thing, and becauſe he had no pity."

It can ſcarce be doubted here, but that David's anger was *real*, and that he was what he appeared to be, greatly provoked and exaſperated againſt the offender; and, indeed, his ſentence againſt him proves he was ſo above meaſure. For to puniſh the man with death, and oblige him to reſtore fourfold beſides, was highly unequitable, and not only diſ-

proportioned to the offence, but far above the utmoſt rigour and ſeverity of the law, which allowed a much ſofter atonement, requiring, in ſuch a caſe, no more than an ample reſtitution and recompenſe in kind. The judgment, however, ſeems to have been truly ſincere and well-meant, and beſpoke rather the honeſt raſhneſs of an unſuſpicious judge, than the cool determination of a conſcious and guilty man, who knew he was going to paſs ſentence upon himſelf.

I take notice of this particular, becauſe it places this inſtance of ſelf-deceit, which is the ſubject of the diſcourſe, in the ſtrongeſt light, and fully demonſtrates the truth of a fact in this great man, which happens every day among ourſelves, namely, that a man may be guilty of very bad and diſhoneſt actions, and yet reflect ſo little, or ſo partially, upon what he has done, as to keep his conſcience free, not only from guilt, but even the remoteſt ſuſpicions, that he is the man which in truth he is, and what the tenor and evidence of his life demonſtrate. If we look into the world—David's is no uncommon caſe;——we ſee ſome one or other perpetually copying this bad original, ſitting in judgment upon himſelf,—hearing his own cauſe, and not knowing what he is doing, haſty in paſſing ſentence, and even executing it too with wrath upon the perſon of another, when, in the language of the prophet, one might ſay to him with juſtice, "Thou art the man."

Of the many revengeful, covetous, falſe, and ill-natured perſons which we complain of in the world, though we all join in the cry againſt them, what man amongſt us ſingles out himſelf as a criminal, or ever

once takes it into his head that he adds to the number?—or where is there a man ſo bad, who would not think it the hardeſt and moſt unfair imputation, to have any of thoſe particular vices laid to his charge?

If he has the ſymptoms never ſo ſtrong upon him, which he would pronounce infallible in another, they are indications of no ſuch malady in himſelf—He ſees, what no one elſe ſees, ſome ſecret and flattering circumſtances in his favour, which no doubt make a wide difference betwixt his caſe and the party's which he condemns.

What other man ſpeaks ſo often and vehemently againſt the vice of pride, ſets the weakneſs of it in a more odious light, or is more hurt with it in another, than the proud man himſelf? It is the ſame with the paſſionate, the deſigning, the ambitious, and ſome other common characters in life; and being a conſequence of the nature of ſuch vices, and almoſt inſeparable from them, the effects of it are generally ſo groſs and abſurd, that where pity does not forbid, it is pleaſant to obſerve and trace the cheat through he ſeveral turnings and windings of the heart, and detect it through all the ſhapes and appearances which it puts on.

Next to theſe inſtances of ſelf-deceit, and utter ignorance of our true diſpoſition and character, which appears in not ſeeing *that* in ourſelves which ſhocks us in another man; there is another ſpecies ſtill more dangerous and deluſive, and which the more guarded perpetually fall into from the judgments they make of different vices, according to their age and com-

plexion, and the various ebbs and flows of their paſſions and deſires.

To conceive this, let any man look into his own heart, and obſerve in how different a degree of deteſtation numbers of actions ſtand there, though equally bad and vitious in themſelves: he will ſoon find, that ſuch of them as ſtrong inclination or cuſtom has prompted him to commit, are generally dreſſed out and painted with all the falſe beauties which a ſoft and flattering hand can give them; and that the others, to which he feels no propenſity, appear at once naked and deformed, ſurrounded with all the true circumſtances of their folly and diſhonour.

When David ſurpriſed Saul ſleeping in the cave and cut off the ſkirt of his robe, we read, his heart ſmote him for what he had done:—ſtrange, it ſmote him not in this matter of Uriah, where it had ſo much ſtronger reaſon to take the alarm.—A whole year had almoſt paſſed from the firſt commiſſion of this injuſtice, to the time the prophet was ſent to reprove him; and we read not once of any remorſe or compunction of heart for what he had done: and it is not to be doubted, had the ſame prophet met him when he was returning up out of the cave,—— and told him, that, ſcrupulous and conſcientious as he then ſeemed and thought himſelf to be, he was deceiving himſelf, and was capable of committing the foulеſt and moſt diſhonourable actions:——that he ſhould one day murder a faithful and a valiant ſervant, whom he ought in juſtice to have loved and honoured;—that he ſhould without pity firſt wound him in the tendereſt part, by taking away his deareſt

poſſeſſion,—and then unmercifully and treacherouſly rob him of his life.——Had Nathan in a prophetic ſpirit foretold to David that he was capable of this, and that he ſhould one day actually do it, and from no other motive but the momentary gratification of a baſe and unworthy paſſion, he would have received the prediction with horror, and ſaid poſſibly with Hazael upon juſt ſuch another occaſion, and with the ſame ignorance of himſelf,—*What! is thy ſervant a dog that he ſhould do this great thing?* and yet in all likelihood, at that very time there wanted nothing but the ſame degree of temptation, and the ſame opportunity to induce him to the ſin, which afterwards overcame him.

Thus the caſe ſtands with us ſtill. When the paſſions are warmed, and the ſin which preſents itſelf exactly tallies to the deſire, obſerve how impetuouſly a man will ruſh into it, and act againſt all principles of honour, juſtice, and mercy.——Talk to him the moment after upon the nature of another vice to which he is not addicted, and from which perhaps his age, his temper, or rank in life ſecure him; take notice, how well he reaſons,—with what equity he determines,—what an honeſt indignation and ſharpneſs he expreſſes againſt it, and how inſenſibly his anger kindles againſt the man who hath done this thing.

Thus we are nice in grains and ſcruples,——but knaves in matters of a pound weight; every day ſtraining at gnats, yet ſwallowing camels;—miſerably cheating ourſelves, and torturing our reaſon, to bring

us in ſuch a report of the ſin as ſuits the preſent appetite and inclination.

Moſt of us are aware of, and pretend to deteſt the barefaced inſtances of that hypocriſy by which men deceive others; but few of us are upon our guard or ſee that more fatal hypocriſy by which we deceive and over-reach our own hearts. It is a flattering and dangerous diſtemper, which has undone thouſands;—we bring the ſeeds of it along with us into the world—they inſenſibly grow up with us from our childhood,—they lie long concealed and undiſturbed, and have generally got ſuch deep root in our natures by the time we are come to years of underſtanding and reflection, that it requires all we have got to defend ourſelves from their effects.

To make the caſe ſtill worſe on our ſides, 'tis with this as with every grievous diſtemper of the body,—the remedies are dangerous and doubtful, in proportion to our miſtakes and ignorance of the cauſe: for in the inſtances of ſelf-deceit, though the head is ſick, and the whole heart faint, the patient ſeldom knows what he ails: of all the things we know and learn, this neceſſary knowledge comes to us the laſt.

Upon what principle it happens thus, I have endeavoured to lay open in the firſt part of this diſcourſe; which I conclude with a ſerious exhortation to ſtruggle againſt them: which we can only hope to do, by converſing more and oftener with ourſelves, than the buſineſs and diverſions of the world generally give us leave.

We have a chain of thoughts, deſires, engagements, and idleneſſes which perpetually return upon

us in their proper time and order—let us, I beſeech you, aſſign and ſet apart ſome ſmall portion of the day for this purpoſe,—of retiring into ourſelves, and ſearching into the dark corners and receſſes of the heart, and taking notice of what is paſſing there. If a man can bring himſelf to do this taſk with a curious and impartial eye, he will quickly find the fruits of it will more than recompenſe his time and labour. He will ſee ſeveral irregularities and unſuſpected paſſions within him which he never was aware of:—he will diſcover, in his progreſs, many ſecret turnings and windings in his heart to which he was a ſtranger, which now gradually open and diſcloſe themſelves to him upon a nearer view: in theſe labyrinths he will trace out ſuch hidden ſprings and motives for many of his moſt applauded actions, as will make him rather ſorry and aſhamed of himſelf, than proud.

In a word, he will underſtand *his errors*, and then ſee the neceſſity, with David, of imploring God to cleanſe him from his ſecret faults,—and with ſome hope and confidence to ſay, with this great man after his conviction,—"Try me, O God, and ſeek the "ground of my heart,——prove me, and examine "my thoughts,—look well if there be any way of "wickedneſs in me, and lead me in the way ever-"laſting"

Now to God the Father, &c. &c.

SERMON V.

ıe Caſe of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath conſidered.

A CHARITY SERMON.

TO THE

VERY REVEREND

RICHARD OSBALDISTON, D. D.

DEAN OF YORK.

SIR,

I HAVE taken the liberty to inſcribe this Diſcourſe to you, in teſtimony of the great reſpect which I owe to your character in general; and from a ſenſe of what is due to it in particular from every member of the *Church of York*.

I wiſh I had as good a reaſon for doing that, which has given me the opportunity of making ſo public and juſt an acknowledgment; being afraid there can be little left to be ſaid upon the ſubject of *Charity*, which has not been often thought, and much better expreſſed by many who have gone before: and indeed it ſeems ſo beaten and common a path, that it is not an eaſy matter for a new-comer to diſtinguiſh himſelf in it, by any thing except the novelty of his *Vehicle*.

I beg, however, Sir, your kind acceptance of it and of the motives which have induced me to ad-

dreſs it to you; one of which I cannot conceal in juſtice to myſelf, becauſe it has proceeded from the ſenſe of many favours and civilities which I have received from you——I am,

REVEREND SIR,

Your moſt obliged, and

faithful humble Servant,

LAURENCE STERNE.

SERMON V.

The Caſe of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath conſidered.

I KINGS XVII. 16.

And the barrel of meal waſted not, neither did the cruſe of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord which he ſpake by the prophet Elijah.

THE words of the text are the record of a miracle wrought in behalf of the widow of Zarephath, who had charitably taken Elijah under her roof, and adminiſtered unto him in a time of great ſcarcity and diſtreſs. There is ſomething very intereſting and affectionate in the manner this ſtory is related in holy writ: and as it concludes with a ſecond ſtill more remarkable proof of GOD's favour to the ſame perſon, in the reſtoration of her dead ſon to life, one cannot but conſider both miracles as rewards of that act of piety, wrought by infinite power, and left upon record in ſcripture, not merely as teſtimonies of the prophet's divine miſſion, but likewiſe as two encouraging inſtances of GOD Almighty's bleſſing upon works of charity and benevolence.

In this view I have made choice of this piece of

ſacred hiſtory; which I ſhall beg leave to make uſe of as the ground-work for an exhortation to charity in general: and that it may better anſwer the particular purpoſe of this ſolemnity, I will endeavour to enlarge upon it with ſuch reflections, as, I truſt in GOD, will excite ſome ſentiments of compaſſion which may be profitable to ſo pious a deſign.

Elijah had fled from two dreadful evils, the approach of a famine, and the perſecution of Ahab, an enraged enemy: and, in obedience to the command of GOD, had hid himſelf by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. In this ſafe and peaceful ſolitude, bleſſed with daily marks of GOD's providence, the holy man dwelt free both from the cares and glories of the world: by miraculous impulſe *the ravens brought him bread and fleſh in the morning, and bread and fleſh in the evening, and he drank of the brook:* till, by continuance of drought (the windows of heaven being ſhut up in thoſe days for three years and ſix months, which was the natural cauſe likewiſe of the famine), it came to paſs after a while, that the brook, the great fountain of his ſupport, dried up; and he is again directed by the word of the Lord where to betake himſelf for ſhelter. He is commanded to ariſe and go to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, with an aſſurance that he had diſpoſed the heart of a widow woman there to ſuſtain him.

The prophet follows the call of his GOD: the ſame hand which brought him to the gate of the city, had led alſo the poor widow out of her doors oppreſſed with ſorrow. She had come forth upon a melancholy

errand, to make preparation to eat her laſt meal and ſhare it with her child.

No doubt ſhe had long fenced againſt this tragical event with all the thrifty management which ſelf-preſervation and parental love could inſpire; full, no doubt, of cares and many tender apprehenſions, leſt the ſlender ſtock ſhould fail them before the return of plenty.

But as ſhe was a widow, having loſt the only faithful friend who would beſt have aſſiſted her in this virtuous ſtruggle, the preſent neceſſity of the times at length overcame her: and ſhe was juſt falling down an eaſy prey to it, when Elijah came to the place where ſhe was. *And he called unto her, and ſaid, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a veſſel, that I may drink. And as ſhe was going to fetch it, he called unto her, and ſaid, Bring me, I pray thee, a morſel of bread in thine hand. And ſhe ſaid, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruſe; and behold, I am gathering two ſticks, that I may go in and dreſs it for me and my ſon, that we may eat and die. And Elijah ſaid unto her, Fear not, but go and do as thou haſt ſaid: but make me thereof a little cake firſt, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy ſon. For thus ſaith the Lord God of Iſrael, The barrel of meal ſhall not waſte, neither ſhall the cruſe of oil fail, until the day that the Lord ſendeth rain upon the earth.*

True charity is always unwilling to find excuſes—Here was a fair opportunity of pleading many; ſhe might have inſiſted over again upon her ſituation, which neceſſarily tied up her hands—ſhe might

have urged the unreasonableness of the request;—that it was reduced to the lowest extremity already—and that it was contrary to justice and the first law of nature, to rob herself and child of their last morsel, and give it to a stranger.

But in generous spirits, compassion is sometimes more than a balance for self-preservation. For, as God certainly interwove that friendly softness in our nature, to be a check upon too great a propensity towards self love—so it seemed to operate here.—For it is observable, that though the prophet backed his request with the promise of an immediate recompense in multiplying her stock; yet it is not evident she was influenced at all by that temptation. For if she had, doubtless it must have wrought such a mixture of self interest into the motive of her compliance, as must greatly have allayed the merit of the action. But this, I say, does not appear, but rather the contrary, from the reflection she makes upon the whole in the last verse of the chapter. *Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.*

Besides, as she was an inhabitant of Zarephath (or, as it is called by St Luke, Sarepta, subject to Sidon, the metropolis of Phenicia, without the bounds of God's people), she had been brought up in gross darkness and idolatry, in utter ignorance of the Lord God of Israel: or, if she had heard of his name, which is all that seems probable, she had been taught to believe the mighty wonders of his hand, and [illegible] less likely to believe his prophet.

[illegible] she might argue, if this man, by some

ſecret myſtery of his own, or through the power of his GOD, is able to procure ſo preternatural a ſupply for me, whence comes it to paſs, that he now ſtands in want himſelf, oppreſſed both with hunger and thirſt?

It appears, therefore, that ſhe muſt have been wrought upon by an unmixed principle of humanity. ——ſhe looked upon him as a fellow partner almoſt in the ſame affliction with herſelf.——She conſidered he had come a weary pilgrimage, in a ſultry climate, through an exhauſted country, where neither bread or water were to be had, but by acts of liberality.—That he had come an unknown traveller; and as a hard heart never wants pretence, that this circumſtance, which ſhould rather have befriended, might have helped to oppreſs him.——She conſidered, for charity is ever frutful in kind reaſons, that he was now far from his own country, and had ſtrayed out of the reach of the tender offices of ſome one who affectionately mourned his abſence—Her heart was touched with pity—She turned in ſilence, and *went and did according as he had ſaid. And behold, both ſhe, and he, and her houſe, did eat many days*; or, as in the margin, one whole year. *And the barrel of meal waſted not, neither did the cruſe of oil fail, until the day that GOD ſent rain upon the earth.*

Though it may not ſeem neceſſary to raiſe conjectures here upon this event, yet it is natural to ſuppoſe, the danger of the famine being thus unexpectedly got over, that the mother began to look hopefully forwards upon the reſt of her days. There were many widows in Iſrael at that time, when the

heavens were shut up for three years and six months: yet, as St. Luke observes, *to none of them was the prophet sent, save to this widow of Sarepta*: in all likelihood, she would not be the last in making the same observation, and drawing from it some flattering conclusion in favour of her son.——Many a parent would build high upon a worse foundation.—"Since "the God of Israel has thus sent his own messen- "ger to us in our distress, to pass by so many houses "of his own people, and stop at mine, to save it in "so miraculous a manner from destruction; doubt- "less, this is but an earnest of his future kind in- "tentions to us: at least his goodness has decreed "to comfort my old age, by the long life and health "of my son:—but perhaps, he has something greater "still in store for him; and I shall live to see the "same hand hereafter crown his head with glory "and honour." We may naturally suppose her innocently carried away with such thoughts, when she is called back by an unexpected distemper which surprises her son, and in one moment brings down all her hopes——*for his sickness was so sore that there was no breath left in him.*——

The expostulations of immoderate grief are seldom just. For, though Elijah had already preserved her son, as well as herself, from immediate death, and was the last cause to be suspected of so sad an accident; yet the passionate mother, in the first transport, challenges him as the author of her misfortune; ——as if he had brought down sorrow upon a house which had so hospitably sheltered him. The prophet was too full of compassion to make reply to so

unkind an accuſation. He takes the dead child *out of his mother's boſom, and laid him upon his own bed: And he cried unto the Lord, and ſaid, O Lord my God, haſt thou brought evil upon the widow with whom I ſojourn, by ſlaying her ſon?* "Is this the reward of all her "charity and goodneſs? Thou haſt before this rob- "bed her of the dear partner of all her joys and all "her cares; and now that ſhe is a widow, and has "moſt reaſon to expect thy protection; behold thou "haſt withdrawn her laſt prop: thou haſt taken "away her child, the only ſtay ſhe had to reſt on." ——*And Elijah cried unto God, and ſaid, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's ſoul come into him again.*

The prayer was urgent, and beſpoke the diſtreſs of a human mind deeply ſuffering in the misfortunes of another;—moreover, his heart was rent with other paſſions.—He was zealous for the name and honour of his GOD, and thought not only his omnipotence, but his glorious attribute of mercy, concerned in the event: for oh! with what triumph would the prophets of Baal retort his own bitter taunt, and ſay, *his God was either talking, or he was purſuing, or was in a journey; or peradventure he ſlept, and ſhould have been awaked!*——He was moreover involved in the ſucceſs of his prayer himſelf;——honeſt minds are moſt hurt by ſcandal.——And he was afraid, leſt ſo foul a one, ſo unworthy of his character, might ariſe among the heathen, who would report with pleaſure: "LO! the widow of Zarephath took the meſſenger "of the God of Iſrael under her roof, and kindly "entertained him, and ſee how ſhe is rewarded!

" Surely the prophet was ungrateful; he wanted " power, or what is worſe, he wanted pity."

Beſides all this, he pleaded not only the cauſe of the widow; it was the cauſe of charity itſelf, which had received a deep wound already, and would ſuffer ſtill more ſhould GOD deny it this teſtimony of his favour. *So the Lord hearkened unto the voice of Elijah, and the ſoul of the child came unto him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the houſe, and delivered him unto his mother; and Elijah ſaid, See, thy ſon liveth.*"

It would be a pleaſure to a good mind to ſtop here a moment, and figure to itſelf the picture of ſo joyful an event.—To behold on one hand the raptures of the parent, overcome with ſurpriſe and gratitude, and imagine how a ſudden ſtroke of ſuch impetuous joy muſt operate on a deſpairing countenance, long accuſtomed to ſadneſs.——To conceive on the other ſide of the *piece*, the holy man approaching with the child in his arms—full of honeſt triumph in his looks, but ſweetened with all the kind ſympathy which a gentle nature could overflow with upon ſo happy an event. It is a ſubject one might recommend to the pencil of a great genius, and would even afford matter for deſcription here; but that it would lead us too far from the particular purpoſe, for which I have enlarged upon thus much of the ſtory already; the chief deſign of which is, to illuſtrate by a fact, which is evident both in reaſon and ſcripture, that a charitable and good action is ſeldom caſt away, but that, even in this life, it is more than probable, that what

is ſo ſcattered ſhall be gathered again with increaſe. *Caſt thy bread upon the waters, and thou ſhalt find it after many days. Be as a father unto the fatherleſs, and inſtead of an husband unto their mother; ſo ſhalt thou be as a ſon of the Moſt High, and he will love thee more than thy mother doth. Be mindful of good turns, for thou knoweſt not what evil ſhall come upon the earth; and when thou falleſt thou ſhalt find a ſtay. It ſhall preſerve thee from all affliction, and fight for thee againſt thy enemies better than a mighty ſhield and a ſtrong ſpear.*

The great inſtability of temporal affairs, and conſtant fluctuation of every thing in this world, afford perpetual occaſions of taking refuge in ſuch a ſecurity.

What by ſucceſſive misfortunes; by failings and croſs accidents in trade; by miſcarriage of projects: ——what by unſuitable expences of parents extravagances of children, and the many other ſecret ways whereby riches make themſelves wings and fly away; ſo many ſurpriſing revolutions do every day happen in families, that it may not ſeem ſtrange to ſay that the poſterity of ſome of the moſt liberal contributors here, in the changes which one century may produce, may poſſibly find ſhelter under this very plant which now they ſo kindly water. Nay, ſo quickly ſometimes has the wheel turned round, that many a man has lived to enjoy the benefit of that charity which his own piety projected.

But beſides this, and excluſive of the right which GOD'S promiſe gives it to protection hereafter, charity and benevolence, in the ordinary chain of effects, have a natural and more immediate tendency

in themſelves to reſcue a man from the accidents of the world, by ſoftening the hearts, and winning every man's wiſhes to its intereſt. When a compaſſionate man falls, who would not pity him? who, that had power to do it, would not befriend and raiſe him up? or could the moſt barbarous temper offer an inſult to his diſtreſs without pain and reluctance? So that it is almoſt a wonder that covetouſneſs, even in ſpite of itſelf, does not ſometimes argue a man into charity, by its own principle of looking forwards, and the firm expectation it would delight in, of receiving its own again with uſury.——So evident is it in the courſe of GOD's providence, and the natural ſtream of things, that a good office one time or other generally meets with a reward——Generally, did I ſay?——how can it ever fail?——when, beſides all this, ſo large a ſhare of the recompenſe is ſo inſeparable even from the action itſelf. Aſk the man who has a tear of tenderneſs always ready to ſhed over the unfortunate? who, withal, is ready to diſtribute and willing to communicate; aſk him, if the beſt things which wits have ſaid of pleaſure, have expreſſed what he has felt, when, by a ſeaſonable kindneſs, he has *made the heart of the widow ſing for joy*. Mark then the expreſſions of unutterable pleaſure and harmony in his looks, and ſay, whether Solomon has not fixed the point of true enjoyment in the right place, when he declares, "that he knew no good there was in "any of the riches or honours of this world, *but for* "*a man to do good with them in his life*." Nor was it without reaſon he made this judgment.——Doubtleſs he had found and ſeen the inſufficiency of all

ſenſual pleaſures; how unable to furniſh either a rational or a laſting ſcheme of happineſs; how ſoon the beſt of them vaniſhed; the leſs exceptionable in vanity, but the guilty both *in vanity and vexation of ſpirit.* But that this was of ſo pure and refined a nature, it burned without conſuming: it was figuratively *the widow's barrel of meal which waſted not, and cruſe of oil which never failed.*

It is not an eaſy matter to add weight to the teſtimony of *the wiſeſt man*, upon the pleaſure of doing good; or elſe the evidence of the philoſopher Epicurus is very remarkable, whoſe word in this matter is the more to be truſted, becauſe a profeſſed ſenſualiſt; who, amidſt all the delicacies and improvements of pleaſure which a luxuriant fancy might ſtrike out, ſtill maintained, that the beſt way of enlarging human happineſs, was by a communication of it to others.

And if it was neceſſary here, or there was time to refine upon this doctrine, one might farther maintain, excluſive of the happineſs which the mind itſelf feels in the exerciſe of this virtue, that the very body of man is never in a better ſtate than when he is moſt inclined to do good offices:—that as nothing more contributes to health than a benevolence of temper, ſo nothing generally was a ſtronger indication of it.

And what ſeems to confirm this opinion, is an obſervation, the truth of which muſt be ſubmitted to every one's reflection—namely—that a diſinclination and backwardneſs to do good, is often attended, if not produced, by an indiſpoſition of the animal as well as rational part of us:——So naturally do the

ſoul and body, as in other caſes ſo in this, mutually befriend, or prey upon each other. And, indeed ſetting aſide all abſtruſer reaſoning upon the point, I cannot conceive but that the very *mechanical motions* which maintain life, muſt be performed with more equal vigour and freedom in that man whom a great and good ſoul perpetually inclines to ſhow mercy to the miſerable, than they can be in a poor ſordid, ſelfiſh wretch, whoſe little contracted heart melts at no man's affliction; but ſits brooding ſo intently over its own plots and concerns, as to ſee and feel nothing, and, in truth, enjoy nothing beyond himſelf; and of whom one may ſay, what that great maſter of nature has, ſpeaking of a natural ſenſe of harmony, which I think with more juſtice may be ſaid of compaſſion, that the man who had it not,——

—Was fit for treaſons, ſtratagems and ſpoils;
The MOTIONS of his ſpirits are dull as night;
And his affections dark as EREBUS:
—Let no ſuch man be truſted.—

What divines ſay of the mind, naturaliſts have obſerved of the body; that there is no paſſion ſo natural to it as love, which is the principle of doing good:——and though inſtances, like this juſt mentioned, ſeem far from being proofs of it, yet it is not to be doubted, but that very hard-hearted man has felt much inward oppoſition before he could prevail upon himſelf to do aught to fix and deſerve the character; and that what we ſay of long habits of vice, that they are hard to be ſubdued, may with equal truth be ſaid concerning the natural impreſ-

ſions of benevolence, that a man muſt do much violence to himſelf, and ſuffer many a painful ſtruggle, before he can tear away ſo great and noble a part of his nature.——Of this, antiquity has preſerved a beautiful inſtance in an anecdote of Alexander the tyrant of Pheres, who, though he had ſo induſtriouſly hardened his heart as to ſeem to take delight in cruelty, inſomuch as to murder many of his ſubjects every day, without cauſe and without pity; yet, at the bare repreſentation of a tragedy, which related the misfortunes of Hecuba and Andromache, he was ſo touched with the fictitious diſtreſs which the poet had wrought up in it, that he burſt out into a flood of tears. The explication of which inconſiſtency is eaſy, and caſts as great a luſtre upon human nature, as the man himſelf was a diſgrace to it. The caſe ſeems to have been this——In *real* life he had been blinded with paſſions, and thoughtleſsly hurried on by intereſt or reſentement;—but here, there was no room for motives of that kind: ſo that his attention being firſt caught hold of, and all his vices laid aſleep; ——then NATURE awoke in triumph, and ſhowed how deeply ſhe had ſown the ſeeds of compaſſion in every man's breaſt; when tyrants, with vices the moſt at enmity with it, were not able entirely to root it out.

But this is painting an amiable virtue, and ſetting her off with ſhades which wickedneſs lends us, when one might ſafely truſt to the force of her own natural charms, and aſk, Whether any thing under heaven, in its own nature, is more lovely and engaging?——To illuſtrate this the more, let us turn

our thoughts within ourſelves, and for a moment let any number of us here imagine ourſelves at this inſtant engaged in drawing the moſt perfect and amiable character, ſuch, as, according to our conceptions of the Deity, we ſhould think moſt acceptable to him, and moſt likely to be univerſally admired by all mankind.—I appeal to your own thoughts, whether the firſt idea which offered itſelf to moſt of our imaginations, would not be that of a compaſſionate benefactor, ſtretching forth his hands to raiſe up the helpleſs orphan? Whatever other virtues we ſhould give our hero, we ſhould all agree in making him a generous friend, who thought the opportunities of doing good to be the only charm of his proſperity: we ſhould paint him like the Pſalmiſt's *river of God*, overflowing the thirſty parts of the earth, that he might enrich them, carrying plenty and gladneſs along with him. If this was not ſufficient, and we were ſtill deſirous of adding a further degree of perfection to ſo great a character; we ſhould endeavour to think of ſome one, if human nature could furniſh ſuch a pattern, who if occaſion required, was willing to undergo all kinds of affliction, to ſacrifice himſelf, to forget his deareſt intereſts, and even lay down his life for the good of mankind——And here, ——O merciful Saviour! how would the bright original of thy unbounded goodneſs break in upon our hearts! *Thou who becameſt poor, that we might be rich*——though Lord of all this world, yet *hadſt not where to lay thy head*——and though equal in power and glory to the great GOD of NATURE, *yet madeſt thyſelf of no reputation, tookeſt upon thee the form*

of a ſervant,——ſubmitting thyſelf, without opening thy mouth, to all the indignities which a thankleſs and undiſcerning people could offer; and at length, to accompliſh our ſalvation, *becameſt obedient unto death* ſuffering thyſelf, as on this day*, *to be led like a lamb to the ſlaughter.*

The conſideration of this ſtupendous inſtance of compaſſion in the Son of God, is the moſt unanſwerable appeal that can be made to the heart of man, for the reaſonableneſs of it in himſelf.——It is the great argument which the Apoſtles uſe in almoſt all their exhortations to good works.——*Beloved, if Chriſt ſo loved us*——the inference is unavoidable; and gives ſtrength and beauty to every thing elſe which can be urged upon the ſubject. And therefore I have reſerved it for my laſt and warmeſt appeal, with which I would gladly finiſh this diſcourſe, that at leaſt for their ſakes for whom it is preached, we might be left to the full impreſſion of ſo exalted and ſo ſeaſonable a motive.——That by reflecting upon the infinite labour of this day's love, in the inſtance of CHRIST's death, we may conſider what an immenſe debt we own each other; and by calling to mind the amiable pattern of his life, in doing good, we might learn in what manner we may beſt diſcharge it.

And, indeed, of all the methods in which a good mind would be willing to do it, I believe there can be none more beneficial, or comprehenſive in its effects, than that for which we are here met together;

* Preached on *Good Friday*.

—the proper education of poor children being the ground-work of almoſt every other kind of charity, as that which makes every other ſubſequent act of it anſwer the pious expectation of the giver.

Without this foundation firſt laid, how much kindneſs in the progreſs of a benevolent man's life is unavoidably caſt away! and ſometimes where it is as fruitleſs as the expoſing a tender plant to all the inclemencies of a cruel ſeaſon, and then going with ſorrow to take it in, when the root is already dead. I ſaid, therefore, this was the foundation of almoſt every kind of charity,—and, might one not have added, of all policy too? ſince the many ill conſequences which attend the want of it, though grievouſly felt by the parties themſelves, are no leſs ſo by the community of which they are members; and moreover, of all miſchief ſeem the hardeſt to be redreſſed—Inſomuch, that when one conſiders the diſloyal ſeductions of popery on one hand, and on the other, that no bad man, whatever he profeſſes, can be a good ſubject, one may venture to ſay, it had been cheaper and better for the nation to have bore the expence of inſtilling ſound principles and good morals into the neglected children of the lower ſort, eſpecially in ſome parts of Great Britain, than to be obliged, ſo often as we have been within this laſt century, to riſe up and arm ourſelves againſt the rebellious effects which the want of them has brought down even to our doors. And, in fact, if we are to truſt antiquity, the truth of which in this caſe we have no reaſon to diſpute, this matter has been looked upon of ſuch vaſt importance to the civil happi-

neſs and peace of a people, that ſome common-wealths, the moſt eminent for political wiſdom, have choſe to make a publick concern of it; thinking it much ſafer to be intruſted to the prudence of the magiſtrate, than to the miſtaken tenderneſs, or natural partiality, of the parent.

It was conſiſtent with this, and beſpoke a very refined ſenſe of policy in the Lacedæmonians) though by the way, I believe, different from what more modern politics would have directed in like circumſtances), when Antipater demanded of them fifty children, as hoſtages for the ſecurity of a diſtant engagement, they made this brave and wiſe anſwer, "they would not,—they could not conſent:—they "would rather give him double the number of their "beſt grown up men."—Intimating, that, however they were diſtreſſed, they would chooſe any inconvenience rather than ſuffer the loſs of their country's education; and the opportunity (which if once loſt can never be regained) of giving their youth an early tincture of religion, and bringing them up to a love of induſtry, and a love of the laws and conſtitution of their country. If this ſhows the great importance of a proper education to children of all ranks and conditions, what ſhall we ſay then of thoſe whom the providence of GOD has placed in the very loweſt lot of life, utterly caſt out of the *way* of knowledge, without a parent——ſometimes, may be, without friend to guide and inſtruct them, but what common pity and the neceſſity of their ſad ſituation engage:——where the dangers which ſurround them on every ſide are ſo great and many, that for one fortu-

nate paſſenger in life, who makes his way well in the world with ſuch early diſadvantages and ſo diſmal a ſetting out, we may reckon thouſands, who every day ſuffer ſhipwreck, and are loſt for ever.

If there is a caſe under heaven which calls out aloud for the more immedate exerciſe of compaſſion, and which may be looked upon as the compendium of all charity, ſurely it is this: and I am perſuaded there would want nothing more to convince the greateſt enemy to theſe kinds of charities that it is ſo, but a bare opportunity of taking a nearer view of ſome of the more diſtreſsful objects of it.

Let him go into the dwellings of the unfortunate, into ſome mournful cottage, where poverty and affliction reign together. There let him behold the diſconſolate widow—ſitting—ſteeped in tears;—thus ſorrowing over the infant ſhe knows not how to ſuccour,—"O my child, thou art now left expoſed to "a wide and vicious world, too full of ſnares and "temptations for thy tender and unpractiſed age. "Perhaps a parent's love may magnify thoſe dangers "——But when I conſider thou art driven out na-"ked into the midſt of them, without friends, with-"out fortune, without inſtruction, my heart bleeds "beforehand for the evils which may come upon "thee. GOD, in whom we truſted, is witneſs, ſo "low had his providence placed us, that we never "indulged one wiſh to have made thee rich,—vir-"tuous we would have made thee;——for thy fa-"ther, *my huſband, was a good man, and feared the* "*Lord*:——and though all the fruits of his care and "induſtry were little enough for our ſupport, yet

" he honeſtly had determined to have ſpared ſome " portion of it, ſcanty as it was, to have placed thee " ſafely in the way of knowledge and inſtruction— " But alas! he is gone from us never to return " more, and with him are fled the means of doing " it: For, *Behold the creditor is come upon us*, to " take all that we have."——Grief is eloquent, and will not eaſily be imitated.——But let the man, who is the leaſt friend to diſtreſſes of this nature, conceive ſome diſconſolate widow uttering her complaint even in this manner, and then let him conſider, *if there is any ſorrow like* this *ſorrow, wherewith the Lord has afflicted* her? or whether there can be any charity like that, of taking *the child out of the mother's boſom*, and reſcuing her from theſe apprehenſions? Should a heathen, a ſtranger to our holy religion and the love it teaches, ſhould he, *as he journeyed, come to the place where* ſhe lay, *when he ſaw, would he not have compaſſion on* her? God forbid a Chriſtian ſhould *this day* want it! or at any time *look upon* ſuch a diſtreſs, *and paſs by on the other ſide!*

Rather let him do, as his Saviour taught him, *bind up the wounds, and pour* comfort into the heart of one, whom the hand of God has ſo bruiſed. Let him practiſe what it is, with Elijah's tranſport, to ſay to the afflicted widow,——*See, thy ſon liveth!*— liveth by my charity, and the bounty of this hour, to all the purpoſes which make life deſirable,—to be made a good man, and a profitable ſubject: on one hand, to be trained up to ſuch a ſenſe of his duty, as may ſecure him an intereſt in the world to come; and with regard to this world, to be ſo brought up

in it to a love of honeſt labour and induſtry, as all his life long to earn and eat his bread with joy and thankfulneſs.

" Much peace and happineſs reſt upon the head " and heart of every one who thus brings children " to CHRIST!—May the bleſſing of him that was " ready to periſh come ſeaſonably upon him!—— " The Lord comfort him, *when he moſt wants it*, " when he lies ſick upon his bed! Make thou, O " God! all his bed in his ſickneſs; and for what " he now ſcatters, give him, then that peace of " thine which paſſeth all underſtanding, and which " nothing in this world can either give or take away." Amen.

SERMON VI.

Phariſee and Publican in the Temple.

LUKE XVIII. 14. 1ſt part.

I tell you this man went down to his houſe juſtified rather than the other.

THESE words are the judgment which our SAVIOUR his left upon the behaviour and different degrees of merit in the two men, the Phariſee and Publican, whom he repreſents, in the foregoing parable as going up into the temple to pray. In what manner they diſcharged this great and ſolemn duty, will beſt be ſeen from a conſideration of the prayer, which each is ſaid to have addreſſed to GOD upon the occaſion.

The phariſee, inſtead of an act of humiliation in that awful preſence before which he ſtood,——with an air of triumph and ſelf-ſufficiency, thanks GOD that he had not made him like others—extortioners, adulterers, unjuſt, or even as this publican.——The publican is repreſented as ſtanding afar off, and, with a heart touched with humility from a juſt ſenſe of his own unworthineſs, is ſaid only to have ſmote upon his breaſt, ſaying,—GOD be merciful to me a ſinner. I tell you, adds our SAVIOUR, this man went down to his houſe juſtified rather than the other.

Though the juſtice of this determination ſtrikes every one at firſt ſight, it may not be amiſs to enter into a more particular examination of the evidence and reaſons upon which it might be founded, not only becauſe it may place the equity of this deciſion in favour of the publican in a ſtronger light, but that the ſubject ſeems likely to lead me to a train of reflections not unſuitable to the ſolemnity of the ſeaſon *.

The phariſee was one of that ſect, who, in our SAVIOUR'S time, what by the auſterity of their lives ——their publick alms-deeds, and greater pretences to piety than other men, had gradually wrought themſelves into much credit and reputation with the people; and indeed, as the bulk of theſe are eaſily caught with appearances, their character ſeems to have been admirably well ſuited to ſuch a purpoſe.——If you looked no farther than the outward part of it, you would think it made up of all goodneſs and perfection; an uncommon ſanctity of life, guarded by great decorum and ſeverity of manners,—profuſe and frequent charities to the poor—many acts of religion—much obſervance of the law—much abſtinence—much prayer.—

It is painful to ſuſpect the appearance of ſo much good——and would have been ſo here, had not our bleſſed SAVIOUR left us their real character upon record, and drawn up by himſelf in one word——that the ſect were like whitened ſepulchres, all fair and beautiful without, and enriched there with whatever could attract the eye of the beholder; but, when

* Preached in *Lent.*

ſearched within-ſide, were full of corruption, and of whatever could ſhock and diſguſt the ſearcher. So that with all their affectation of piety, and more extraordinary ſtrictneſs and regularity in their outward deportment, all was irregular and uncultivated within——and all theſe fair pretences, how promiſing ſoever, blaſted by the indulgence of the worſt of human paſſions—pride—ſpiritual pride, the worſt of all pride—hypocriſy, ſelf love, covetouſneſs, extortion, cruelty, and revenge. What pity it is that the ſacred name of religion ſhould ever have been borrowed, and employed in ſo bad a work, as in covering over ſuch a black catalouge of vices——or that the fair form of virtue ſhould have been thus diſgraced and for ever drawn into ſuſpicion, from the unworthy uſes of this kind to which the artful and abandoned have often put her! The phariſee ſeems to have had not many ſcruples of this kind; and the prayer he makes uſe of in the temple is a true picture of the man's heart, and ſhows with what a diſpoſition and frame of mind he came to worſhip.—

God! I thank thee, that thou haſt formed me of different materials from the reſt of my ſpecies, whom thou haſt created frail and vain by nature, but by choice and diſpoſition utterly corrupt and wicked.

Me, thou haſt faſhioned in a different mould, and haſt infuſed ſo large a portion of thy ſpirit into me, lo! I am raiſed above the temptations and deſires to which fleſh and blood are ſubject.——I thank thee that thou haſt made me thus——not a frail veſſel of clay, like that of other men—or even this publican,

but that I ſtand here a choſen and ſanctified veſſel unto thee.

After this obvious paraphraſe upon the words, which ſpeaks no more than the true ſpirit of the phariſee's prayer,——you would naturally aſk, what reaſon was there for all this triumph——or what foundation could he have to inſult in this manner over the infirmities of mankind——or even thoſe of the humble publican who ſtood before him?—Why, ſays he, I faſt twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I poſſeſs.——Truly, a very indifferent account of himſelf——and if that was all he had to offer in his own behalf, GOD knows, it was but a weak foundation to ſupport ſo much arrogance and ſelf-conceit; becauſe the obſervance of both the one and the other of theſe ordinances might be ſuppoſed well enough to be conſiſtent with the moſt profligate of life and manners.

The conduct and behaviour of the publican appears very different——and indeed as much the reverſe to this, as you could conceive. But before we enter upon that, as I have ſpoken largely to the character of the phariſee, 'twill be but juſtice to ſay a word or two in general to his——The publican was one of that order of men employed by the Roman emperors in levying the taxes and contributions which were from time to time exacted from Judea as a conquered nation. Whether from the particular fate of that employment, owing to the fixed averſion which men have to part with what is their own, or from whatever other cauſes it happened——ſo it was; that the whole ſet of men were odious, inſomuch that the

name of a publican was a term of reproach and infamy amongſt the Jews.

Perhaps the many inſtances of rigour to which their office might direct them——heightened ſometimes by a mixture of cruelty and inſolence of their own——and poſſibly always made to appear worſe than they were by the loud clamours and miſrepreſentations of others——all might have contributed to form and fix this odium. But it was here, no doubt, as in all other claſſes of men whoſe profeſſions expoſe them to more temptations than that of others——that there are numbers who ſtill behave well, and who amidſt all the ſnares and opportunities which lie in their way,——paſs through them, not only with an unblemiſhed character, but with the inward teſtimony of a good conſcience.

The publican in all likelihood was one of theſe—and the ſentiments of candour and humility which the view of his condition inſpired, are ſuch as could come only from a heart and character thus deſcribed.

He goes up into the temple to pay his ſacrifice of prayer—in the diſcharge of which, he pleads no merit of his own,——enters into no compariſon with others,—or juſtification of himſelf with GOD; but, in reverence to that holier part of the temple where his preſence was ſuppoſed more immediately to be diſplayed—he keeps afar off—is afraid to lift up his eyes towards heaven——but ſmites upon his breaſt, and in a ſhort but fervent ejaculation—ſubmiſſively begs GOD to have mercy upon his ſins. O GOD! how precious, how amiable, is true humility! what a difference in thy ſight does it make to conſiſt be-

twixt man and man! Pride was not made for a creature with ſuch manifold imperfections;—religious pride is a dreſs which ſtill worſe becomes him ——becauſe, of all others, 'tis that to which he has the leaſt pretence.——The beſt of us fall ſeven times a day, and thereby add ſome degree of unprofitableneſs to the character of thoſe who do all that is commanded them.——Was I perfect, therefore, ſays Job, I would not know my ſoul, I would be ſilent, I would be ignorant of my own righteouſneſs; for ſhould I ſay I was perfect, it would prove me to be perverſe. From this introduction, I will take occaſion to recommend this virtue of religious humility, which ſo naturally falls from the ſubject, and which cannot more effectually be enforced, than by an inquiry into the chief cauſes which produce the oppoſite vice to it—that of ſpiritual pride;—for in this malady of the mind of man——the caſe is parallel with moſt others of his body, the dangers of which can never rightly be apprehended; nor can remedies be applied either with judgment or ſucceſs, till they are traced back to their firſt principles, and the ſeeds of the diſorder are laid open and conſidered.

And firſt, I believe, one of the moſt general cauſes of ſpiritual pride, is that which ſeems to have miſled the phariſee—a miſtaken notion of the true principles of his religion. He thought, no doubt, that the whole of it was comprehended in the two articles of paying tithes and frequent faſting, and that when he had diſcharged his conſcience of them——he had done all that was required at his hands, and might with reaſon go and thank GOD that he had not made

him like others.—It is not to be queſtioned, but through force of this error, the phariſee might think himſelf to be, what he pretended, a religious and upright man——For however he might be brought to act a double and inſincere part in the eyes of men upon worldly views—it is not to be ſuppoſed—that when he ſtood by himſelf, apart in the temple, and no witneſſes of what paſſed between him and his GOD —that he ſhould knowingly and wilfully have dared to act ſo open and barefaced a ſcene of mockery in the face of Heaven. This is ſcarce probable—and therefore it muſt have been owing to ſome deluſion in his education, which had early planted in his mind falſe and wretched notions of the eſſentials of religion——which, as he grew up, had proved the ſeeds of infinite error both in practice and ſpeculation.

With the reſt of his ſect, he had been ſo principled and inſtructed as to obſerve a ſcrupulous nicety and moſt religious exactneſs in the leſſer matters of his religion—its frequent waſhings—its faſtings, and other external rites, of no merit in themſelves—but to ſtand exempted from the more troubleſome exactneſs in the weightier matters of the law, which were of eternal and unchangeable obligation. So that, they were in truth blind guides——who thus would ſtrain at a gnat, and yet ſwallow a camel; and, as our SAVIOUR reproves them from a familiar inſtance of domeſtic inconſiſtency—would make clean the outſide of the cup and platter—yet ſuffer the inſide——the moſt material part, to be full of corruption and exceſs. From this knowledge of the character and

principles of the phariſee, 'tis eaſy to account for his ſentiments and behaviour in the temple, which were juſt ſuch as they would have led one to have expected.

Thus it has always happened by a fatality common to all ſuch abuſes of religion, as make it to conſiſt in external rites and ceremonies more than inward purity and integrity of heart.—As theſe outward things are eaſily put in practice—and capable of being attained to, without much capacity, or much oppoſition to fleſh and blood— it too naturally betrays the profeſſors of it into a groundleſs perſuaſion of their own godlineſs, and a deſpicable one of that of others, in their religious capacities, and the relations in which they ſtand towards GOD: which is the very definition of ſpiritual pride.

When the true heat and ſpirit of devotion is thus loſt and extinguiſhed under a cloud of oſtentatious ceremonies and geſtures, as is remarkable in the Roman church—where the celebration of high maſs, when ſet off to the beſt advantage with all its ſcenical decorations and finery, looks more like a theatrical performance, than that humble and ſolemn appeal which duſt and aſhes are offering up to the throne of GOD;—when religion, I ſay, is thus clogged and bore down by ſuch a weight of ceremonies——it is much eaſier to put in pretenſions to holineſs upon ſuch a mechanical ſyſtem as is left of it, than where the character is only to be got and maintained by a painful conflict and perpetual war againſt the paſſions. 'Tis eaſier, for inſtance, for a zealous papiſt to croſs himſelf and tell his beads, than for an hum-

ble proteſtant to ſubdue the luſts of anger, intemperance, cruelty, and revenge, to appear before his Maker with that preparation of mind which becomes him. The operation of being ſprinkled with holy water, is not ſo difficult in itſelf, as that of being chaſte and ſpotleſs within——conſcious of no dirty thought or diſhoneſt action. 'This a much ſhorter way to kneel down at a confeſſional and receive abſolution—than to live ſo as to deſerve it—not at the hands of men—but at the hands of GOD——who ſees the heart, and cannot be impoſed on——The achievement of keeping Lent, or abſtaining from fleſh on certain days, is not ſo hard, as that of abſtaining from the works of it at all times—eſpecially as the point is generally managed amongſt the richer ſort with ſuch art and epicuriſm at their tables——and with ſuch indulgence to a poor mortified appetite—that an entertainment upon a faſt is much more likely to produce a *ſurfeit* than a fit of ſorrow.

One might run the parallel much farther, but this may be ſufficient to ſhow how dangereous and deluſive theſe miſtakes are,—how apt to miſlead and overſet weak minds which are ever apt to be caught by the pomp of ſuch external parts of religion. This is ſo evident, that even in our own church, where there is the greateſt chaſtity in things of this nature —and of which none are retained in our worſhip, but what, I believe, tend to excite and aſſiſt it—yet ſo ſtrong a propenſity is there in our nature to ſenſe ——and ſo unequal a match is the underſtanding of the bulk of mankind, for the impreſſions of outward things——that we ſee thouſands who every day

miſtake the ſhadow for the ſubſtance, and, was it fairly put to the trial, would exchange the reality for the appearance.

You ſee this was almoſt univerſally the caſe of the Jewiſh church—where, for want of a proper guard and diſtinction betwixt the means of religion and religion itſelf, the ceremonial part in time ate away the moral part, and left nothing but a ſhadow behind. ——'Tis to be feared the buffooneries of the Romiſh church bid fair to do it the ſame ill office, to the diſgrace and utter ruin of Chriſtianity wherever popery is eſtabliſhed. What then remains, but that we rectify theſe groſs and pernicious notions of religion, and place it upon its true bottom, which we can only do, by bringing back religion to that cool point of reaſon which firſt ſhowed us its obligation—by always remembering that GOD is a ſpirit—and muſt be worſhipped ſuitable to his nature, *i. e.* in ſpirit and in truth—and that the moſt acceptable ſacrifice we can offer him is a virtuous and an upright mind —and however neceſſary it is, not to leave the ceremonial and poſitive parts of religion undone—yet not like the phariſee to reſt there——and omit the weightier matters, but keep this in view perpetually, that though the inſtrumental duties of religion are duties of unqueſtionable obligation to us—yet they are ſtill but INSTRUMENTAL DUTIES, conducive to the great end of all religion——which is to purify our hearts—and conquer our paſſions—and, in a word, to make us wiſer and better men——better neighbours—better citizens—and better ſervants to God.

To whom, &c.

SERMON VII.

Vindication of Human Nature.

ROMANS XIV. 7.

For none of us liveth to himſelf.

HERE is not a ſentence in ſcripture, which ſtrikes arrow ſoul with greater aſtoniſhment;—and one ght as eaſily engage to clear up the darkeſt pro- n in geometry to an ignorant mind, as make a lid one comprehend the truth and reaſonableneſs his plain propoſition——No man liveth to him- ! Why?—Does any man live to any thing elſe? n the whole compaſs of human life, can a pru- t man ſteer to a ſafer point?—Not live to himſelf! To whom then?——Can any intereſts or concerns ich are foreign to a man's ſelf have ſuch a claim r him, that he muſt ſerve under them,—ſuſpend own purſuits,——ſtep out of his right courſe, till ers have paſſed by him, and attained the ſeveral s and purpoſes of living before him?

If, with a ſelfiſh heart, ſuch an inquirer ſhould pen to have a ſpeculating head too, he will pro- d, and aſk you, Whether this ſame principle ich the apoſtle here throws out of the life of man,

is not in fact the grand bias of his nature?——That however we may flatter ourſelves with fine-ſpun notions of diſintereſtedneſs and heroiſm in what we do; were the moſt popular of our actions ſtripped naked, and the true motives and intentions of them ſearched to the bottom; we ſhould find little reaſon for triumph upon that ſcore.——

In a word, he will ſay, that a man is altogether a bubble to himſelf in this matter, and that after all that can be ſaid in his behalf, the trueſt definition that can be given of him is this, that he is a ſelfiſh animal; and that all his actions have ſo ſtrong a tincture of that character, as to ſhow (to whomever elſe he was intended to live) that in fact he lives only to himſelf.

Before I reply directly to this accuſation, I cannot help obſerving by the way, that there is ſcarce any thing which has done more diſſervice to ſocial virtue, than the frequent repreſentations of human nature under the hideous picture of deformity, which, by leaving out all that is generous and friendly in the heart of man, have ſunk him below the level of a brute, as if he was a compoſition of all that was mean-ſpirited and ſelfiſh. Surely 'tis one ſtep towards acting well, to think worthily of our nature; and as in common life the way to make a honeſt man, is to ſuppoſe him ſo, and treat him as ſuch;——ſo here, to ſet ſome value upon ourſelves, enables us to ſupport the character, and even inſpires and adds ſentiments of generoſity and virtue to thoſe which we have already preconceived. The ſcripture tells, that GOD made man in his own image,——not ſurely in

the ſenſitive and corporeal part of him, that could bear no reſemblance with a pure and infinite Spirit —but what reſemblance he bore was undoubtedly in the moral rectitude, and the kind and benevolent affections of his nature. And though the brightneſs of this image has been ſullied greatly by the fall of man in our firſt parents, and the characters of it rendered ſtill leſs legible by the many ſuperinductions of his own depraved appetites ſince,—yet 'tis a laudable pride and a true greatneſs of mind to cheriſh a belief, that there is ſo much of that glorious image ſtill left upon it, as ſhall reſtrain him from baſe and diſgraceful actions; to anſwer which end, what thought can be more conducive than that of our being made in the likeneſs of the greateſt and beſt of Beings? this is a plain conſequence. And the conſideration of it ſhould have in ſome meaſure been a protection to human nature, from the rough uſage ſhe has met with from the ſatirical pens of ſo many of the French writers, as well as of our own country, who, with more wit than well-meaning, have deſperately fallen foul upon the whole ſpecies, as a ſet of creatures incapable either of private friendſhip or publick ſpirit, but juſt as the caſe ſuited their own intereſt and advantage.

That there is ſelfiſhneſs and meanneſs enough in the ſouls of one part of the world, to hurt the credit of the other part of it, is what I ſhall not diſpute againſt; but to judge of the whole from this bad ſample, and becauſe one man is plotting and artful in his nature,—or a ſecond openly makes his pleaſure or his profit the ſole centre of all his deſigns,—or be-

cauſe a third ſtrait-hearted wretch ſits confined within himſelf——feels no misfortunes, but thoſe which touch himſelf; to involve the whole race without mercy under ſuch deteſted characters, is a concluſion as falſe as it is pernicious; and was it in general to gain credit, could ſerve no end, but the rooting out of our nature all that is generous, and planting in the ſtead of it ſuch an averſion to each other, as muſt untie the bands of ſociety, and rob us of one of the greateſt pleaſures of it, the mutual communication of kind offices; and by poiſoning the fountain, rendering every thing ſuſpected that flows from it.

To the honour of human nature, the ſcripture teaches us, that GOD made man upright,—and though he has ſince found out many inventions, which have much diſhonoured this noble ſtructure, yet the foundation of it ſtands as it was,—the whole frame and deſign of it carried on upon ſocial virtue and public ſpirit, and every member of us ſo evidently ſupported by this ſtrong cement, that we may ſay with the apoſtle, *that no man liveth to himſelf.* In whatſoever light we view him, we ſhall ſee evidently, that there is no ſtation or condition of this life,—— no office or relation, or circumſtance, but there ariſe from it ſo many ties, ſo many indiſpenſable claims upon him, as muſt perpetually carry him beyond any ſelfiſh conſideration, and ſhow plainly that was a man fooliſhly wicked enough to deſign to live to himſelf alone, he would either find it impracticable, or he would loſe, at leaſt, the very thing which made life itſelf deſirable. We know that our Creator, like an all-wiſe contriver, in this, as in all other of his

works has implanted in mankind ſuch appetites and inclinations as were ſuitable for their ſtate; that is ſuch as would naturally lead him to the love of ſociety and friendſhip, without which he would have been found in a worſe condition than the very beaſts of the field. No one, therefore, who lives in ſociety, can be ſaid to live to himſelf,—he lives to his GOD, —to his king, and his country.——He lives to his family, to his friends, to all under his truſt, and, in a word, he lives to the whole race of mankind: whatſoever has the character of men, and wears the ſame image of GOD, that he does, is truly his brother and has a juſt claim to his kindneſs.—That this is the caſe in fact, as well as in theory, may be made plain to any one who has made any obſervations upon human life.——When we have traced it through all its connections——viewed it under the ſeveral obligations which ſucceed each other in a perpetual rotation through the different ſtages of a haſty pilgrimage, we ſhall find that theſe do operate ſo ſtrongly upon it, and lay us juſtly under ſo many reſtraints, that we are every hour ſacrificing ſomething to ſociety, in return for the benefits we receive from it.

To illuſtrate this, let us take a ſhort ſurvey of the life of any one man (not liable to great exceptions, but ſuch a life as is common to moſt); let us examine it merely to this point, and try how far it will anſwer ſuch a repreſentation.

If we begin with him in that early age wherein the ſtrongeſt marks of undiſguiſed tenderneſs and diſintereſted compaſſion ſhow themſelves—I might

previouſly obſerve, with what impreſſions he is come out of the hands of GOD, with the very bias upon his nature, which prepares him for the character which he was deſigned to fulfil. But let us paſs by the years which denote childhood, as no lawful evidence, you'll ſay, in this diſpute; let us follow him to the period, when he is juſt got looſe from tutors and governors, when his actions may be argued upon with leſs exception. If you obſerve, you will find, that one of the firſt and leading propenſities of his nature, is that which diſcovers itſelf in the deſires of ſociety, and the ſpontaneous love towards thoſe of his kind. And though the natural wants and exigences of his condition are, no doubt, one reaſon of this amiable impulſe,—God having founded that in him as a proviſional ſecurity to make him ſocial;—yet though it is a reaſon in nature—'tis a reaſon to him yet undiſcovered. Youth is not apt to philoſophiſe ſo deeply—but follows—as it feels itſelf prompted by the inward working of benevolence—without view to itſelf, or previous calculation either of the loſs or profit which may accrue. Agreeably to this, obſerve how warmly, how heartily he enters into friendſhips,—how diſintereſted, and unſuſpicious in the choice of them,——how generous and open in his profeſſions!—how ſincere and honeſt in making them good!—When his friend is in diſtreſs,—what lengths he will go,—what hazards he will bring upon himſelf,——what embarraſſment upon his affairs to extricate and ſerve him! If man is altogether a ſelfiſh creature (as theſe moralizers would make him) 'tis certain he does not arrive at the full maturity of it,

in this time of his life.——No.—If he deſerves any accuſation, is 'tin the other extreme, " That in his " yeuth he is generally more FOOL than KNAVE;"—and ſo far from being ſuſpected of living to himſelf, that he lives rather to every body elſe; the unconſciouſneſs of art and deſign, in his own intentions, rendering him ſo utterly void of a ſuſpicion of it in others, as to leave him too oft a bubble to every one who whould take the advantage.—But you'll ſay, he ſoon abates of theſe tranſports of diſintereſted love; and as he grows older,——grows wiſer, and learns to live more to himſelf.

Let us examine.

That a longer knowledge of the world, and ſome experience of inſincerity,——will teach him a leſſon of more caution in the choice of friendſhips, and leſs forwardneſs in the undiſtinguiſhed offers of his ſervices, is what I grant.——But if he cools of theſe, does he not grow warmer ſtill in connections of a different kind? Follow him, I pray you, into the next ſtage of life, where he has entered into engagements, and appears as the father of a family, and you will ſee the paſſions ſtill remains—the ſtream ſomewhat more confined— but runs the ſtronger for it, ——the ſame benevolence of heart altered only in its courſe, and the difference of objects towards which it tends. Take a ſhort view of him in this light, as acting under the many tender claims which that relation lays upon him,——ſpending many weary days and ſleepleſs nights—utterly forgetful of himſelf, intent only upon his family, and with an anxious heart contriving and labouring to preſerve it

from diſtreſs, againſt that hour when he ſhall be taken from its protection. Does ſuch a one live to himſelf?—He who riſes early, late takes reſt, and eats the bread of carefulneſs, to ſave others the trouble of doing ſo after him; does ſuch a one live only to himſelf?——Ye, who are parents, anſwer this queſtion for him. How oft have ye ſacrificed your health,—your eaſe,—your pleaſures,——nay, the very comforts of your lives, for the ſake of your children?—How many indulgences have ye given up?——What ſelf denials and difficulties have ye cheerfully undergone for them!—In their ſickneſs, or reports of their miſconduct, how have ye *gone on your way ſorrowing?* What alarms within you, when fancy forbodes but imaginary misfortunes hanging over them?—But when real ones have overtaken them, *and miſchief befallen them in the way in which they have gone*, how, ſharper than a ſword, have ye felt the workings of parental kindneſs? In whatever period of human life we look for proofs of ſelfiſhneſs,—— let us not ſeek them in this relation of a parent, whoſe whole life, when truly known, is often little elſe but a ſucceſſion of cares, heart-aches, and diſquieting apprehenſions,—enough to ſhow that he is but an inſtrument in the hands of GOD to provide for the well-being of others, to ſerve their intereſt as well as his own.

If you try the truth of this reaſoning upon every other part or ſituation of the ſame life, you will find it holds good in one degree or other. Take a view of it out of theſe cloſer connections both of a friend and parent.——Conſider him for a moment under

that natural alliance in which even a heathen poet has placed him, namely, that of a man;——and as ſuch to his honour, as one incapable of ſtanding unconcerned in whatever concerns his fellow-creatures, ——Compaſſion has ſo great a ſhare in our nature, and the miſeries of this world are ſo conſtant an exerciſe of it, as to leave it in no one's power) who deſerves the name of a man), in this reſpect, *to live to himſelf.*

He cannot ſtop his ears againſt the cries of the unfortunate.—The ſad ſtory of the fatherleſs and him that has no helper *muſt* be heard.—*The ſorrowful ſighing of the priſoner will come before him;* and a thouſand other untold caſes of diſtreſs to which the life of man is ſubject; find a way to his heart, let intereſt guard the paſſage as it will:—*if he hath this world's goods, and ſeeth his brother have need, he will not be able, to ſhut up his bowels of compaſſion from him.*

Let any man of common humanity look back upon his own life as ſubjected to theſe ſtrong claims, and recollect the influence they have had upon him. How oft the mere impulſes of generoſity and compaſſion have led him out of his way:—In how many acts of charity and kindneſs, his fellow-feeling for others has made him forget himſelf:—In neighbourly offices, how oft he has acted againſt all conſiderations of profit, convenience, nay ſometimes even of juſtice itſelf?——Let him add to this account, how much, in the progreſs of his life, has been given up even to the leſſer obligations of civility and good manners,—what reſtraints they have laid him under! How large a portion of his time,—how much of his in-

clination and the plan of life he ſhould moſt have wiſhed, has from time to time been made a ſacrifice to his good nature and diſinclination to give pain or diſguſt to others.

Whoever takes a view of the life of man in this glaſs wherein I have ſhown it, will find it ſo beſet and hemmed in with obligations of one kind or other, as to leave little room to ſuſpect, that *man can live to himſelf:* and ſo cloſely has our Creator linked us together (as well as all other parts of his works) for the preſervation of that harmony in the frame and ſyſtem of things which his wiſdom has at firſt eſtabliſhed,—that we find this bond of mutual dependence, however relaxed, is too ſtrong to be broke: and I believe, that the moſt ſelfiſh men find it is ſo, and that they cannot, in fact, live ſo much to themſelves, as the narrowneſs of their own hearts inclines them. If theſe reflections are juſt, upon the moral relations in which we ſtand to each other, let us cloſe the examination with a ſhort reflection upon the great relation in which we ſtand to God.

The firſt and more natural thought on this ſubject, which at one time or other will thruſt itſelf upon every man's mind, is this,—That there is a GOD who made me,—to whoſe gift I owe all the powers and faculties of my ſoul, to whoſe providence I owe all the bleſſings of my life, and by whoſe permiſſion it is that I exerciſe and enjoy them;—that I am placed in this world as a creature of but a day, haſting to the place from whence I ſhall not return;—that I am accountable for my conduct and behavour to this great and wiſeſt of Beings, be-

fore whoſe judgment-ſeat I muſt finally appear, and receive the things done in my body,—whether they are good, or whether they are bad.

Can any one doubt, but the moſt inconſiderate of men ſometimes ſit down coolly, and make ſome ſuch plain reflections as theſe upon their ſtate and condition?——or that, after they have made them, can one imagine they loſe all effect?—As little appearance as there is of religion in the world, there is a great deal of its influence felt in its affairs—nor can one ſo root out the principles of it, but, like nature, they will return again, and give checks and interruptions to guilty purſuits. There are ſeaſons when the thoughts of a juſt God overlooking, and the terror of an after-reckoning, has made the moſt determined tremble, and ſtop ſhort in the execution of a wicked purpoſe; and if we conceive that the worſt of men lay ſome reſtraint upon themſelves from the weight of this principle, what ſhall we think of the good and virtuous part of the world, who live under the perpetual influence of it,——who ſacrifice their appetites and paſſions from a conſcience of their duty to God; and conſider him as the object to whom they have dedicated their ſervice, and make that the firſt principle, and ultimate end of all their actions?——How many real and unaffected inſtances there are in the world of men thus governed, will not concern us ſo much to enquire, as to take care that we are of the number: which may God grant for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt. Amen.

SERMON VIII.

Time and Chance.

ECCLESIASTES IX. 11.

I returned and ſaw under the ſun, that the race is not to the ſwift, —nor the battle to the ſtrong,—neither yet bread to the wiſe, nor yet riches to men of underſtanding, nor yet favour to men of ſkill,—but time and chance happeneth to them all.

WHEN a man caſts a look upon this melancholy deſcription of the world, and ſees, contrary to all his gueſſes and expectations, what different fates attend the lives of men,—how oft it happens in the world, that there is not even bread to the wiſe, nor riches to men of underſtanding, &c.——he is apt to conclude with a ſigh upon it,—in the words,—though not in the ſenſe of the wiſe man, that time and chance happeneth to them all.——That time and chance,—apt ſeaſons and fit conjunctures have the greateſt ſway, in the turns and diſpoſals of men's fortunes: and that, as theſe lucky hits (as they are called) happen to be for, or againſt a man,—they either open the way to his advancement againſt all obſtacles,—or block it up againſt all helps and attempts;—that, as the text intimates, neither *wiſdom*, nor *underſtanding*, nor *ſkill*, ſhall be able to ſurmount them.

However widely we may differ in our reaſonings upon this obſervation of Solomon's, the authority of the obſervation is ſtrong beyond doubt, and the evidence given of it in all ages ſo alternately confirmed by examples and complaints, as to leave the fact itſelf unqueſtionable,——That things are carried on in this world ſometimes ſo contrary to all our reaſonings, and the ſeeming probabilities of ſucceſs,—that even the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battle to the ſtrong,—nay, what is ſtranger ſtill——nor yet bread to the wiſe, who ſhould leaſt ſtand in want of it,——nor yet riches to men of underſtanding, who you would think beſt qualified to acquire them,——nor yet favour to men of ſkill, whoſe merit and pretences bid the faireſt for it,——but that there are ſome ſecret and unſeen workings in human affairs, which baffle all our endeavours,——and turn aſide the courſe of things in ſuch a manner,——that the moſt likely cauſes diſappoint and fail of producing for us the effect which we wiſhed and naturally expected from them.

You will ſee a man, of whom, was you to form a conjecture from the appearances of things in his favour,—you would ſay was ſetting out in the world, with the faireſt proſpect of making his fortune in it;——with all the advantages of birth to recommend him,—of perſonal merit to ſpeak for him——and of friends to help and puſh him forwards: you will behold him, notwithſtanding this, diſappointed in every effect you might naturally have looked for, from them; every ſtep he takes towards his advancement, ſomething inviſible ſhall pull him back, ſome unfore-

ſeen obſtacle ſhall riſe up perpetually in his way, and keep him there.——In every application he makes,—ſome untoward circumſtance ſhall blaſt it,—He ſhall riſe early,—late take reſt,——and eat the bread of carefulneſs,——yet ſome happier man ſhall ſtill riſe up, and ever ſtep in before him and leave him ſtruggling, to the end of his life, in the very ſame place in which he firſt began it.

The hiſtory of a ſecond, ſhall in all reſpects be the contraſt to this. He ſhall come into the world with the moſt unpromiſing appearance,—ſhall ſet forwards without fortune, without friends,—without talents to procure him either the one or the other. Nevertheleſs, you will ſee this clouded proſpect brighten up inſenſibly, unaccountably before him; every thing preſented in his way ſhall turn out beyond his expectations;——in ſpite of that chain of unſurmountable difficulties which firſt threatened him,—time and chance ſhall open him a way;——a ſeries of ſucceſsful occurrences ſhall lead him by the hand to the ſummit of honour and fortune; and, in a word, without giving him the pains of thinking, or the credit of projecting it, ſhall place him in ſafe poſſeſſion of all that ambition could wiſh for.

The hiſtories of the lives and fortunes of men are full of inſtances of this nature,——where favourable times and lucky accidents have done for them, what wiſdom or ſkill could not; and there is ſcarce any one who has lived long in the world, who, upon looking backwards, will not diſcover ſuch a mixture of theſe in the many ſucceſsful turns which have happened in his life, as to leave him very little rea-

ſon to diſpute againſt the fact, and, I ſhould hope, as little upon the concluſions to be drawn from it.

Some, indeed, from a ſuperficial view of this repreſentation of things, have atheiſtically inferred,—that becauſe there was ſo much of lottery in this life ——and mere caſuality ſeemed to have ſuch a ſhare in the diſpoſal of our affairs,—that the providence of God ſtood neuter and unconcerned in there ſeveral workings, leaving them to the mercy of time and chance to be furthered or diſappointed as ſuch blind agents directed. Whereas in truth the very oppoſite concluſion follows. For conſider,—if a ſuperior intelligent Power did not ſometimes croſs and over-rule events in this world,—then our policies and deſigns in it would always anſwer according to the wiſdom and ſtratagem in which they were laid, and every cauſe, in the courſe of things would produce its natural effect, without variation. Now as this is not the caſe, it neceſſarily follows from Solomon's reaſoning, that, if the race is not to the ſwift, if knowledge and learning do not always ſecure men from want,—nor care and induſtry always make men rich, ——nor art and ſkill infallibly make men high in the world; that there is ſome other cauſe which mingles itſelf in human affairs, and governs and turns them as it pleaſes; which cauſe can be no other than the Firſt Cauſe of all things, and the ſecret and over-ruling providence of that Almighty God, who though his dwelling is ſo high, yet he humbleth himſelf to behold the things that are done in earth, raiſing up the poor out of the duſt, and lifting the beggar from the dunghill, and, contrary to all hopes, putting

him with princes, even with the princes of his people; which, by the way, was the caſe of David, who makes the acknowledgment!—And no doubt—one reaſon why GOD has ſelected to his own diſpoſal, ſo many inſtances as this, where events have run counter to all probabilities,—was to give teſtimony to his providence in governing the world, and to engage us to a conſideration and dependence upon it, for the event and ſucceſs of our undertakings *. For undoubtedly—as I ſaid, it ſhould ſeem but ſuitable to nature's laws, that the race ſhould ever be to the ſwift,—and the battle to the ſtrong;——it is reaſonable that the beſt contrivances and means ſhould have beſt ſucceſs:——and ſince it often falls out otherwiſe in the caſe of man, where the wiſeſt projects are overthrown,—and the moſt hopeful means are blaſted, and time and chance happens to all;—you muſt call in the Deity to untie this knot:—for though at ſundry times—ſundry events fall out—which we, who look no farther then the events themſelves, call chance becauſe they fall out quite contrary both to our intentions and our hopes,——yet, at the ſame time, in reſpect of GOD's providence over-ruling in theſe events, it were profane to call them chance, for they are pure deſignation, and though inviſible, are ſtill the regular diſpenſations of the ſuperintending power of that Almighty Being, from whom all the laws and powers of nature are derived, who, as he has appointed,—ſo holds them as inſtruments in his hand: and without invading the liberty and free-will of his creatures, can turn the paſſions and deſires of

* *Vide* TILLOTSON's ſermon on this ſubject.

their hearts to fulfil his own righteouſneſs, and work ſuch effects in human affairs, which to us ſeem merely *caſual*,——but to him, certain and determined, and what his infinite wiſdom ſees neceſſary to be brought about for the government and preſervation of the world, over which providence perpetually preſides.

When the ſons of Jacob had caſt their brother Joſeph into the pit for his deſtruction,—one would think, if ever any incident which concerned the life of man, deſerved to be called chance it was this—— That the company of Iſhmaelites ſhould happen to paſs by, in that open country, at that very place, at that very time too, when this barbarity was committed. After he was reſcued by ſo favourable a contingency,——his life and future fortune ſtill depended upon a ſeries of contingencies equally improbable; for inſtance, had the buſineſs of the Iſhmaelites who bought him, carried them from Gilead, to any other part of the world beſides Egypt——or, when they arrived there, had they ſold their bond-ſlave to any other man but Potiphar, throughout the whole empire,—or, after that diſpoſal, had the unjuſt accuſations of his maſter's wife caſt the youth into any other dungeon than that where the king's priſoners were kept,—or had it fallen out at any other criſis than when Pharaoh's chief butler was caſt there too:—had this, or any other of theſe events fallen out otherwiſe than it did,——a ſeries of unmerited misfortunes had overwhelmed him,—and, in conſequence, the whole land of Egypt and Canaan. From the firſt opening, to the concluſion of this long and

intereſting tranſaction, the Providence of GOD ſuffered every thing to take its courſe. The malice and cruelty of Joſeph's brethren wrought their worſt miſchief againſt him; baniſhed him from his country and the protection of his parent.—The luſt and baſeneſs of a diſappointed woman ſunk him ſtill deeper;—loaded his character with an unjuſt reproach,——and to complete his ruin, doomed him, friendleſs, to the miſeries of an hopeleſs priſon, where he lay neglected. Providence, though it did not croſs theſe events,—yet Providence bent them to the moſt merciful ends. When the whole DRAMA was opened, then the wiſdom and contrivance of every part of it was diſplayed. Then it appeared, it was not they (as the patriarch inferred in conſolation of his brethren), it was not they that ſold him, but GOD;—'twas He ſent him thither before them;——his ſuperintending power availed itſelf of their paſſions,—directed the operations of them, held the chain in his hand, and turned and wound it to his own purpoſe. "Ye verily thought evil againſt me,——but GOD "meant it for good;—ye had the guilt of a bad in-"tention,—his Providence the glory of accompliſh-"ing a good one,—by preſerving *you a poſterity upon* "*the earth, and bringing to paſs, as it is this day, to* "*ſave much people alive.*" All hiſtory is full of ſuch teſtimonies, which, though they may convince thoſe who look no deeper than the ſurface of things, that time and chance happen to all,—yet to thoſe who look deeper, they manifeſt, at the ſame time, that there is a hand much buſier in human affairs than what we vainly calculate; which, though the pro-

ſectors of this world overlook,—or at leaſt make no allowance for in the formation of their plans, they generally find in the execution of them. And though the fataliſt may urge, that every event in this life is brought about by the miniſtry and chain of natural cauſes,——yet, in anſwer, let him go one ſtep higher—and conſider,—whoſe power it is that enables their cauſes to work,—whoſe knowledge it is, that foreſees what will be their effects,——whoſe goodneſs it is, that is inviſibly conducting them forwards to the beſt and greateſt ends for the happineſs of his creatures.

So that, as a great reaſoner juſtly diſtinguiſhes upon this point,—" It is not only religiouſly ſpeaking, but with the ſtricteſt and moſt philoſophical truth of expreſſion, that the ſcripture tells us, *that* GOD *commandeth* the ravens,—that they are his directions which *the winds and the ſeas obey*. If his ſervant hides himſelf by the brook, ſuch an order of cauſes and effects ſhall be laid,—that the fowls of the air ſhall miniſter to his ſupport. When this recourſe fails, and his prophet is directed to go to Zarephath,——for that he has *commanded* a widow woman there to ſuſtain him,—the ſame hand which leads the prophet to the gate of the city,—ſhall lead forth the diſtreſſed widow to the ſame place, to take him under her roof; and though upon the impulſe of a different occaſion ſhall nevertheleſs be made to fulfil his promiſe and intention of their mutual preſervation."

Thus much for the truth and illuſtration of this great and fundamental doctrine of a Providence; the

belief of which is of ſuch conſequence to us as to be the great ſupport and comfort of our lives.

Juſtly therefore might the Pſalmiſt upon this declaration, that the Lord is King—conclude, that the earth may be glad therefore; yea, the multitude of the iſles may be glad thereof.

May GOD grant the perſuaſion may make us as virtuous, as it has reaſon to make us joyful; and that it may bring forth in us the fruits of good living, to his praiſe and glory!—to whom be all might, majeſty and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON IX.

The Character of Herod *.

MATTHEW xi. 17, 18.

Then was fulfilled that which was ſpoken by Jeremy the prophet, ſaying,——In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted, becauſe they are not.

THE words which St Matthew cites here, as fulfilled by the cruelty and ambition of Herod,——are in the 31ſt chapter of Jeremiah, the 15th verſe. In the foregoing chapter, the prophet having declared GOD's intention of turning the mourning of his people into joy, by the reſtoration of the tribes which had been led away captive into Babylon; he proceeds, in the beginning of this chapter, which contains this propheſy, to give a more particular deſcription of the great joy and feſtivity of that promiſed day, when they were to return once more to their own land, to enter upon their ancient poſſeſſions, and enjoy again all the privileges they had loſt, and, amongſt others, and what was above them all,——the favour and

* Preached on Innocent's Day.

protection of GOD, and the continuation of his mercies to them and their posterity.

To make therefore the impression of this change the stronger upon their minds—he gives a very pathetic representation of the preceding sorrow on that day when they were first led away captive.

Thus saith the Lord, A voice was heard in Rama; lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they were not.

To enter into the full sense and beauty of this description, it is to be remembered that the tomb of Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife, as we read in the 35th of Genesis, was situated near Rama, and betwixt that place and Bethlehem. Upon which circumstance, the prophet raises one of the most affecting scenes that could be conceived; for as the tribes, in their sorrowful journey betwixt Rama and Bethlehem, in their way to Babylon, were supposed to pass by this monumental pillar of their ancestor Rachel, Jacob's wife,——the prophet, by a common liberty in rhetoric, introduces her as rising up out of her sepulchre; and, as the common mother of two of their tribes, weeping for her children, bewailing the sad catastrophe of her posterity led away into a strange land,—refusing to be comforted, because they were not,——lost and cut off from their country, and in all likelihood, never to be restored back to her again.

The Jewish interpreters say upon this, that the patriarch Jacob buried Rachel in this very place, foreseeing, by the Spirit of prophesy, that his posterity

ſhould that way be led captive, that ſhe might, as they paſſed her, intercede for them.——

But this fanciful ſuperſtructure upon the paſſage, ſeems to be little elſe than a mere dream of ſome of the Jewiſh doctors; and indeed, had they not dreamt it when they did, 'tis great odds but ſome of the Romiſh dreamers would have hit upon it before now. For as it favours the doctrine of interceſſions——if there had not been undeniable vouchers for the real inventors of the conceit, one ſhould much ſooner have ſought for it among the oral traditions of this church, than in the Talmud, where it is.——

But this by the by. There is ſtill another interpretation of the words here cited by St. Matthew which altogether excludes this ſcenical repreſentation I have given of them.——By which 'tis thought that the lamentation of Rachel here deſcribed, has no immediate reference to Rachel, Jacob' wife, but that it ſimply alludes to the ſorrows of her deſcendants, the diſtreſſed mothers of the tribes of Benjamin and Ephraim, who might accompany their children led into captivity as far as Rama, in their way to Babylon, who wept and wailed upon this ſad occaſion; and, as the prophet deſcribes them in the perſon of Rachel, refuſing to be comforted for the loſs of her children, looking upon their departure without hope or proſpect of ever beholding a return.

Which ever of the two ſenſes you give the words of the prophet, the application of them by the evangeliſt is equally juſt and faithful. For as the former ſcene he relates, was tranſacted upon the very ſame ſtage,—in the ſame diſtrict of Bethlehem near Rama

—where ſo many mothers of the ſame tribe now ſuffered this ſecond moſt affecting blow—the words of Jeremiah, as the evangeliſt obſerves, were literally accompliſhed; and, no doubt, in that horrid day, a voice was heard again in Rama, lamentation and bitter weeping——Rachel weeping for her children, and refuſing to be comforted;——every Bethlemitiſh mother involved in this calamity, beholding it with hopeleſs ſorrow——gave vent to it——each one bewailing her children, and lamenting the hardneſs of their lot, with the anguiſh of a heart as incapable of conſolation, as they were of redreſs. Monſter!—could no conſideration of all this tender ſorrow ſtay thy hands?——Could no reflection upon ſo much bitter lamentation, throughout the coaſts of Bethlehem, interpoſe and plead in behalf of ſo many wretched objects, as this tragedy would make?——Was there no way open to ambition, but that thou muſt trample upon the affections of nature? Could no pity for the innocence of childhood——no ſympathy for the yearnings of parental love, incline thee to ſome other meaſures for thy ſecurity——but thou muſt thus pitileſsly ruſh in—take the victim by violence—tear it from the embraces of the mother—offer it up before her eyes—leave her diſconſolate for ever—broken hearted with a loſs—ſo affecting in itſelf—ſo circumſtanced with horror, that no time how friendly ſoever to the mournful—ſhould ever be able to wear out the impreſſion?

There is nothing in which the mind of man is more divided than in accounts of this horrid nature. For when we conſider man as faſhioned by his Ma-

ker—innocent and upright—full of the tendereſt diſpoſitions—with a heart inclining him to kindneſs, and the love and protection of his ſpecies—this idea of him would almoſt ſhake the credit of ſuch accounts:——ſo that to clear them——we are forced to take a ſecond view of man—very different from this favourable one, in which we inſenſibly repreſent him to our imaginations;—that is—we are obliged to conſider him—not as he was made—but as he is—a creature, by the violence and irregularity of his paſſions, capable of being perverted from all theſe friendly and benevolent propenſities, and ſometimes hurried into exceſſes ſo oppoſite to them, as to render the moſt unnatural and horrid accounts of what he does but too probable.—The truth of this obſervation will be exemplified in the caſe before us. For, next to the faith and character of the hiſtorian who reports ſuch facts,—the particular character of the perſon who committed them, is to be conſidered as a voucher for their truth and credibility;—— and if, upon inquiry, it appears, that the man acted but conſiſtent with himſelf,—and juſt ſo as you would have expected from his principles, the credit of the hiſtorian is reſtored,—and the fact related ſtands inconteſtible, from ſo ſtrong and concurring an evidence on its ſide.——

With this view, it may not be an unacceptable application of the remaining part of a diſcourſe upon this day, to give you a ſketch of the character of Herod, not as drawn from ſcripture,—for in general it furniſhes us with few materials for ſuch deſcriptions;—the ſacred ſcripture cuts off in few words

the hiſtory of the ungodly, how great ſoever they were in the eyes of the world,——and on the other hand dwells largely upon the ſmalleſt actions of the righteous.—We find all the circumſtances of the lives of Abraham, Iſaac, Jacob, and Joſeph, recorded in the minuteſt manner.—The wicked ſeem only mentioned with regret; juſt brought upon the ſtage, on purpoſe to be condemned. The uſe and advantage of which conduct——is, I ſuppoſe, the reaſon —as in general it enlarges on no character, but what is worthy of imitation. 'Tis however undeniable that the lives of bad men are not without uſe;—— and whenever ſuch a one is drawn, not with a corrupt view to be admired—but on purpoſe to be deteſted—it muſt excite ſuch an horror againſt vice, as will ſtrike indirectly the ſame good impreſſion. And though it is painful in the laſt degree to paint a man in the ſhades which his vices have caſt upon him,—yet when it ſerves this end, and at the ſame time illuſtrates a point in ſacred hiſtory—it carries its own excuſe with it.

This Herod, therefore, of whom the evangeliſt ſpeaks, if you take a ſuperficial view of his life, you would ſay was a compound of good and evil;—that though he was certainly a bad man,—yet you would think the maſs was tempered at the ſame time with a mixture of good qualities: So that, in courſe, as is not uncommon, he would appear with two characters very different from each other. If you looked on the more favourable ſide, you would ſee a man of great addreſs——popular in his behaviour——generous, prince-like in his entertainments and ex-

pences, and, in a word, ſet off with all ſuch virtues and ſhowy properties, as bid high for the countenance and approbation of the world.

View him in another light, he was an ambitious, deſigning man, ſuſpicious of all the world,—rapacious,—implacable in his temper, without ſenſe of religion,—or feeling of humanity.——Now, in all ſuch complex characters as this,—the way the world uſually judges is,—to ſum up the good and the bad againſt each other,—deduct the leſſer of theſe articles from the greater, and (as we do in paſſing other accounts) give credit to the man for what remains upon the balance. Now, though this ſeems a fair ——yet I fear it is often a fallacious reckoning,—— which, though it may ſerve in many ordinary caſes of private life, yet will not hold good in the more notorious inſtances of men's lives, eſpecially when ſo complicated with good and bad, as to exceed all common bounds and proportions. Not to be deceived in ſuch caſes, we muſt work by a different rule, which, though it may appear leſs candid,—— yet, to make amends, I am perſuaded will bring us in general much nearer to the thing we want,—— which is truth. The way to which is—in all judgments of this kind, to diſtinguiſh and carry in your eye, the principal and ruling paſſion which leads the character—and ſeparate that from the other parts of it,—and then take notice, how far his other qualities, good and bad, are brought to ſerve and ſupport that. For want of this diſtinction, we often think ourſelves inconſiſtent creatures, when we are the fartheſt from it; and all the variety of ſhapes and contradictory

appearances we put on, are in truth but ſo many different attempts to gratify the ſame governing appetite.

With this clew, let us endeavour to unravel this character of Herod as here given.

The firſt thing which ſtrikes one in it, is ambition, an immoderate thirſt, as well as jealouſy of power;—how inconſiſtent ſoever in other parts, his character appears invariable in this, and every action of his life was true to it.—From hence we may venture to conclude, that this was *his* ruling paſſion,—and that moſt, if not all the other wheels were put in motion by this firſt ſpring. Now let us conſider how far this was the caſe in fact.

To begin with the worſt part of him—I ſaid he was a man of no ſenſe of religion, or at leaſt no other ſenſe of it, but that which ſerved his turn——for he is recorded to have built temples in Judea, and erected images in them for idolatrous worſhip——not from a perſuaſion of doing right, for he was bred a Jew, and conſequently taught to abhor all idolatry,——but he was in truth ſacrificing all this time to a greater idol of his own, his ruling paſſion; for, if we may truſt Joſephus, his ſole view in ſo groſs a compliance was to ingratiate himſelf with Auguſtus, and the great men of Rome, from whom he held his power.——With this he was greedy and rapacious:——how could he be otherwiſe, with ſo devouring an appetite as ambition to provide for!——He was jealous in his nature, and ſuſpicious of all the world——Show me an ambitious man that is not ſo; for as ſuch a man's hand, like Iſhmael's, is againſt every

man, he concludes that every man's hand in courſe is againſt him.

Few men were ever guilty of more aſtoniſhing acts of cruelty—and yet the particular inſtances of them in Herod were ſuch as he was hurried into by the alarms this waking paſſion perpetually gave him. He put the whole Sanhedrim to the ſword——ſparing neither age, or wiſdom, or merit,——one cannot ſuppoſe ſimply from an inclination to cruelty——no ——they had oppoſed the eſtabliſhment of his power at Jeruſalem.

His own ſons, two hopeful youths, he cut off by a public execution.——The worſt men have natural affection——and ſuch a ſtroke as this would run ſo contrary to the natural workings of it, that you are forced to ſuppoſe the impulſe of ſome more violent inclination to over-rule and conquer it.—And ſo it was, for the Jewiſh hiſtorian tells us, 'twas jealouſy of power——his darling object——of which he feared they would one day or other, diſpoſſeſs him;—ſufficient inducement to tranſport a man of ſuch a temper into the bloodieſt exceſſes.

Thus far this one fatal and extravagant paſſion accounts for the dark-ſide of Herod's character. This governing principle being firſt laid open——all his other bad actions follow in courſe, like ſo many ſymptomatic complaints from the ſame diſtemper.

Let us ſee, if this was not the caſe even of his virtues too.

At firſt ſight it ſeems a myſtery——how a man ſo black as Herod has been thus far deſcribed—— ſhould be able to ſupport himſelf in the favour and

friendſhip of ſo wiſe and penetrating a body of men as the Roman ſenate, of whom he held his power. To counterbalance the weight of ſo bad and deteſted a character—and be able to bear it up as Herod did, one would think he muſt have been maſter of ſome great ſecret worth enquiring after—he was ſo. But that ſecret was no other than what appears on this reverſe of his character.—He was a perſon of great addreſs——popular in his outward behaviour.—— He was generous, prince-like in his entertainments and expences. The world was then as corrupt, at leaſt, as now—and Herod underſtood it—knew at what price it was to be bought——and what qualities would bid the higheſt for its good word and approbation.

And in truth, he judged this matter ſo well—— that notwithſtanding the general odium and prepoſſeſſion which aroſe againſt ſo hateful a character—in ſpite of all the ill impreſſions, from ſo many repeated complaints of his cruelties and oppreſſions—he yet ſtemmed the torrent—and by the ſpecious diſplay of theſe popular virtues, bore himſelf up againſt it all his life.—So that, at length, when he was ſummoned to Rome to anſwer for his crimes—Joſephus tells us—that by the mere magnificence of his expences—and the apparent generoſity of his behaviour,—he entirely confuted the whole charge—and ſo ingratiated himſelf with the Roman ſenate—and won the heart of Auguſtus (as he had that of Antony before) that he ever after had his favour and kindneſs; which I cannot mention without adding, that it is an eternal ſtain upon the character

and memory of Auguſtus, that he ſold his countenance and protection to ſo bad a man, for ſo mean and baſe a conſideration.

From this point of view, if we look back upon Herod—his beſt qualities will ſhrink into little room; and, how glittering ſoever in appearance, when brought to this balance, are found wanting. And in truth, if we would, not willingly be deceived in the value of any virtue or ſet of virtues in ſo complex a character—we muſt call them to this very account; examine whom they ſerve, what paſſion and what principle they have for their maſter. When this is underſtood, the whole clew is unraveled at once, and the character of Herod, as complicated as it is given us in hiſtory—when thus analyſed, is ſummed up in three words—*That he was a man of unbounded ambition, who ſtuck at nothing to gratify it*—ſo that not only his vices were miniſterial to his ruling paſſion, but his virtues too (if they deſerve the name) were drawn in, and liſted into the ſame ſervice.

Thus much for the character of Herod—the critical reveiw of which has many obvious uſes, to which I may truſt you, having time but to mention that particular one which firſt led me into this examination, namely, that all objections againſt the evangeliſt's account of this day's ſlaughter of the Bethlemitiſh infants—from the incredibility of ſo horrid an account—are ſilenced by this account of the man; ſince, in this, he acted but like himſelf, and juſt ſo as you would expect in the ſame circumſtances, from every man of ſo ambitious a head—and ſo bad a heart.—Conſider, what havock ambition has made

——how often the ſame tragedy has been acted upon larger theatres——where not only the innocence of childhood——or the grey hairs of the aged, have found no protection——but whole countries, without diſtinction, have been put to the ſword, or what is as cruel, have been driven forth to nakedneſs and famine, to make way for new ones, under the guidance of this paſſion—For a ſpecimen of this, reflect upon the ſtory related by Plutarch; when, by order of the Roman ſenate, ſeventy populous cities were unawares ſacked and deſtroyed, at one prefixed hour, by P. Æmilius,——by whom one hundred and fifty thouſand unhappy people were driven in one day into captivity—to be ſold to the higheſt bidder, to end their days in cruel labour and anguiſh. As aſtoniſhing as the account before us is, it vaniſhes into nothing from ſuch views; ſince it is plain from all hiſtory, that there is no wickedneſs too great for ſo unbounded a cauſe, and that the moſt horrid accounts in hiſtory are, as I ſaid above, but too probable effects of it.——

May GOD of his mercy defend mankind from future experiments of this kind—and grant we may make a proper uſe of them, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt. Amen.

SERMON X.

Job's Account of the Shortneſs and Troubles of Life conſidered.

JOB XIV. 1, 2.

Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble —He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth alſo as a ſhadow, and continueth not.

THERE is ſomething in this reflection of holy Job's upon the ſhortneſs of life, and inſtability of human affairs, ſo beautiful and truly ſublime; that one might challenge the writings of the moſt celebrated orators of antiquity, to produce a ſpecimen of eloquence, ſo noble and thoroughly affecting. Whether this effect be owing in ſome meaſure to the pathetic nature of the ſubject reflected on; or to the Eaſtern manner of expreſſion, in a ſtyle more exalted and ſuitable to ſo great a ſubject, or (which is the more likely account) becauſe they are properly the words of that Being, who firſt inſpired man with language, and taught his mouth to utter; who opened the lips of the dumb, and made the tongue of the infant eloquent;—to which of theſe we are to refer the beauty and ſublimity of this, as well as that of numberleſs

other paſſages in holy writ, may not ſeem now material: but ſurely, without theſe helps, never man was better qualified to make juſt and noble reflections upon the ſhortneſs of life, and inſtability of human affairs, than Job was, who had himſelf waded through ſuch a ſea of troubles, and in his paſſage had encountered many viciſſitudes of ſtorms and ſunſhine, and by turns had felt both the extremes, of all the happineſs, and of all the wretchedneſs, that mortal man is heir to.

The beginning of his days was crowned with every thing that ambition could wiſh for;——he was the greateſt of all the men of the Eaſt——had large and unbounded poſſeſſions; and, no doubt, enjoyed all the comforts and advantages of life, which they could adminiſter.——Perhaps you will ſay, a wiſe man might not be inclined to give a full looſe to this kind of happineſs, without ſome better ſecurity for the ſupport of it, than the mere poſſeſſion of ſuch goods of fortune, which often ſlip from under us, and ſometimes unaccountably make themſelves wings and fly away.——But he had that ſecurity too,—for the hand of Providence which had thus far protected, was ſtill leading him forwards, and ſeemed engaged in the preſervation and continuance of theſe bleſſings;——God had ſet a hedge about him, and about all that he had on every ſide; he had bleſſed all the works of his hands, and his ſubſtance increaſed every day. Indeed, even with this ſecurity, riches to him that hath *neither child nor brother*, as the wiſe man obſerves, inſtead of a comfort, prove ſometimes a ſore travel and vexation.—The mind of man is not always

ſatisfied with the reaſonable aſſurance of its own enjoyments, but will look forwards; and, if it diſcovers ſome imaginary void, the want of ſome beloved object to fill his place after him, will often diſquiet itſelf in vain, and ſay—"For whom do I labour, and "bereave myſelf of reſt?"

This bar to his happineſs GOD had likewiſe taken away in bleſſing him with a numerous offspring of ſons and daughters, the apparent inheritors of all his preſent happineſs.—Pleaſing reflection! to think the bleſſings GOD has indulged one's ſelf in, ſhall be handed and continued down to a man's own ſeed: How little does this differ from a ſecond enjoyment of them, to an affectionate parent, who naturally looks forward with as ſtrong an intereſt upon his children, as if he was to live over again in his own poſterity!

What could be wanting to finiſh ſuch a picture of a happy man!—ſurely nothing, except a virtuous diſpoſition to give a reliſh to theſe bleſſings, and direct him to make a proper uſe of them.——He had that too; for he was a perfect and upright man, one that feared GOD, and eſchewed evil.

In the midſt of all this proſperity, which was as great as could well fall to the ſhare of one man;—whilſt all the world looked gay, and ſmiled upon him, and every thing round him ſeemed to promiſe if poſſible, an increaſe of happineſs: in one inſtant—all is changed into ſorrow and utter deſpair.

It pleaſed GOD for wiſe purpoſes to blaſt the fortunes of his houſe, and cut off the hopes of his poſterity, and in one mournful day to bring this great

prince from his palace down to the dunghill. His flocks and herds, in which conſiſted the abundance of his wealth, were part conſumed by a fire from heaven, the remainder taken away by the ſword of the enemy: his ſons and daughters, whom 'tis natural to imagine ſo good a man had ſo brought up in a ſenſe of their duty, as to give him all reaſonable hopes of much joy and pleaſure in their future lives —natural proſpect for a parent to look forwards at, to recompenſe him for the many cares and anxieties which their infancy had coſt him! theſe dear pledges of his future happineſs were all, all ſnatched from him at one blow, juſt at the time that one might imagine they were beginning to be the comfort and delight of his old age, which moſt wanted ſuch ſtaves to lean on;——and as circumſtances add to an evil, ſo they did to this;—for it fell out, not only by a very calamitous accident, which was grievous enough in itſelf, but likewiſe upon the back of his other misfortunes, when he was ill prepared to bear ſuch a ſhock; and what would ſtill add to it, it happened at an hour when he had leaſt reaſon to expect it, when he would naturally think his children ſecure and out of the way of danger. "For whilſt they were feaſting and making merry in their eldeſt brother's houſe, a great wind out of the wilderneſs ſmote the four corners of the houſe, and it fell upon them."

Such a concurrence of misfortunes is not the common lot of many: and yet there are inſtances of ſome who have undergone as ſevere trials, and bravely ſtruggled under them; perhaps by natural force of

ſpirits, the advantages of health, and the cordial aſſiſtance of a friend: and with theſe helps, what may not a man ſuſtain?——but this was not Job's caſe; for ſcarce had theſe evils fallen upon him, when he was not only borne down with a grievous diſtemper, which afflicted him from the crown of his head to the ſole of his foot, but likewiſe his three friends, in whoſe kind conſolations he might have found a medicine,—even the wife of his boſom, whoſe duty it was with a gentle hand to have ſoftened all his ſorrows, inſtead of doing this, they cruelly inſulted and became the reproachers of his integrity. O God! what is man when thou thus bruiſeſt him, and makeſt his burden heavier, as his ſtrength grows leſs?—— Who, that had found himſelf thus an example of the many changes and chances of this mortal life;—— when he conſidered himſelf now ſtripped and left deſtitute of ſo many valuable bleſſings which the moment before thy Providence had poured upon his head:—when he reflected upon this gay delightſome ſtructure, in appearance ſo ſtrongly built, ſo pleaſingly ſurrounded with every thing that could flatter his hopes and wiſhes, and beheld it all levelled with the ground in one moment, and the whole proſpect vaniſh with it like the deſcription of an enchantment:—who, I ſay, that had ſeen and felt the ſhock of ſo ſudden a revolution, would not have been furniſhed with juſt and beautiful reflections upon the occaſion? and ſaid with Job in the words of the text, "That man that is born of a woman, is of few days, "and full of miſery—that he cometh forth like a

" flower, and is cut down; he fleeth alſo as a ſhadow, " and continueth not."

The words of the text are an epitome of the *natural* and *moral* vanity of man, and contain two diſtinct declarations concerning his ſtate and condition in each reſpect.

Firſt, That he is a creature of few days; and ſecondly, That thoſe days are full of trouble.

I ſhall make ſome reflections upon each of theſe in their order, and conclude with a practical leſſon from the whole.

And firſt, That he is of few days. The compariſon which Job makes uſe of, That man cometh forth like a flower, is extremely beautiful, and more to the purpoſe than the moſt elaborate proof, which in truth the ſubject will not eaſily admit of;—the ſhortneſs of life being a point ſo generally complained of in all ages ſince the flood, and ſo univerſally felt and acknowledged by the whole ſpecies, as to require no evidence beyond a ſimilitude; the intent of which is not ſo much to prove the fact, as to illuſtrate and place it in ſuch a light as to ſtrike us, and bring the impreſſion home to ourſelves in a more affecting manner.

Man comes forth, ſays Job, like a flower, and is cut down;——he is ſent into the world the faireſt and nobleſt part of GOD's works,—faſhioned after the image of his Creator with reſpect to reaſon and the great faculties of the mind. He cometh forth glorious as the flower of the field: as it ſurpaſſes the vegetable world in beauty, ſo does he the animal world in the glory and excellencies of his nature.

The one—if no untimely accident oppreſs it, ſoon arrives at the full period of its perfection,——is ſuffered to triumph for a few moments, and is plucked up by the roots in the very pride and gayeſt ſtage of its being :——or if it happens to eſcape the hands of violence, in a few days it neceſſarily ſickens of itſelf and dies away.

Man likewiſe, though his progreſs is ſlower, and his duration ſomething longer, yet the periods of his growth and declenſion are nearly the ſame, both in the nature and manner of them.

If he eſcapes the dangers which threaten his tender years, he is ſoon got into the full maturity and ſtrength of life : and if he is ſo fortunate as not to be hurried out of it then by accidents, by his own folly and intemperance—if he eſcapes theſe, he naturally decays of himſelf;——a period comes faſt upon him, beyond which he was not made to laſt.—Like a flower or fruit which may be plucked up by force before the time of their maturity, yet cannot be made to outgrow the period when they are to fade and drop of themſelves; when that comes, the hand of nature then plucks them both off; and no art of the botaniſt can uphold the one, or ſkill of the phyſician preſerve the other, beyond the periods to which their original frames and conſtitutions were made to extend. As God has appointed and determined the ſeveral growths and decays of the vegetable race, ſo he ſeems as evidently to have preſcribed the ſame laws to man, as well as all living creatures, in the firſt rudiments of which there are contained the ſpecific powers of their growth, duration, and extinc-

tion; and when the evolutons of thoſe animal powers are exhauſted and run down, the creature expires and dies of itſelf, as ripe fruit falls from the tree, or a flower preſerved beyond its bloom drops and periſhes upon the ſtalk.

Thus much for this compariſon of Job's, which though it is very poetical, yet conveys a juſt idea of the thing referred to.—"That he fleeth alſo as a 'ſhadow, and continueth not,"—is no leſs a faithful and fine repreſentation of the ſhortneſs and vanity of human life, of which one cannot give a better explanation, than by referring to the original, from whence the picture was taken.——With how quick a ſucceſſion, do days, months and years paſs over our heads!——how truly like a ſhadow that departeth do they flee away inſenſibly, and ſcarce leave an impreſſion with us!——When we endeavour to call them back by reflection, and conſider in what manner they have gone, how unable are the beſt of us to give a tolerable account!——and were it not for ſome of the more remarkable ſtages which have diſtinguiſhed a few periods of this rapid progreſs—— we ſhould look back upon it all as Nebuchadnezzar did upon his dream when he awoke in the morning; —he was ſenſible many things had paſſed, and troubled him too, but had paſſed on ſo quickly, they had left no footſteps behind, by which he could be enabled to trace them back.——Melancholy account of the life of man! which generally runs on in ſuch a manner, as ſcarce to allow time to make reflections which way it has gone.

How many of our firſt years ſlide by in the inno-

cent ſports of childhood, in which we are not able to make reflections upon them! how many more thoughtleſs years eſcape us in our youth, when we are unwilling to do it; and are ſo eager in the purſuit of pleaſure, as to have no time to ſpare, to ſtop and conſider them!

When graver and riper years come on, and we begin to think it time to reform, and ſet up for men of ſenſe and conduct, then the buſineſs and perplexing intereſts of this world, and the endleſs plotting and contriving how to make the moſt of it, do ſo wholly employ us, that we are too buſy to make reflections upon ſo unprofitable a ſubject.—As families and children increaſe, ſo do our affections, and with them are multiplied our cares and toils for their preſervation and eſtabliſhment;——all which take up our thoughts ſo cloſely, and poſſeſs them ſo long, that we are often overtaken by grey hairs before we ſee them, or have found leiſure to conſider how far we were got——what we have been doing—and for what purpoſe GOD ſent us into the world. As man may juſtly be ſaid to be of few days, conſidered with reſpect to this haſty ſucceſſion of things, which ſoon carries him into the decline of his life; ſo may he likewiſe be ſaid to flee like a ſhadow and continue not, when his duration is compared with other parts of GOD's works, and even the works of his own hands, which outlaſt him many generations;—whilſt his—as Homer obſerves, like leaves, one generation drops, and another ſprings up, to fall again, and be forgotten.

But when we farther conſider his days in the light

in which we ought chiefly to view them, as they appear in thy ſight, O God! with whom a thouſand years are but as yeſterday; when we reflect that this hand-breadth of life is all that is meaſured out to man from that eternity for which he is created, how does this ſhort ſpan vaniſh to nothing in the compariſon! 'Tis true, the greateſt portion of time will do the ſame when compared with what is to come; and therefore ſo ſhort and tranſitory a one, as threeſcore years and ten, beyond which all is declared to be labour and ſorrow, may the eaſier be allowed: and yet how uncertain are we of that portion, ſhort as it is Do not ten thouſand accidents break off the ſlender thread of human life, long before it can be drawn out to that extent?—The new born babe falls down an eaſy prey, and moulders back again into duſt, like a tender bloſſom put forth in an untimely hour.—— The hopeful youth in the very pride and beauty of his life is cut off; ſome cruel diſtemper or unthought-of accident lays him proſtrate upon the earth, to purſue Job's compariſon, like a blooming flower ſmit and ſhriveled up with a malignant blaſt. In this ſtage of life, chances multiply upon us,—the ſeeds of diſorders are ſown by intemperance or neglect,—— infectious diſtempers are more eaſily contracted,—— when contracted they rage with greater violence, and the ſucceſs in many caſes is more doubtful, inſomuch that they who have exerciſed themſelves in computations of this kind tell us, "That one half of the "whole ſpecies, which are born into the world, go "out of it again, and are all dead in ſo ſhort a ſpace "as the firſt ſeventeen years."

Theſe reflections may be ſufficient to illuſtrate the firſt part of Job's declaration, "*That man is of few* "*days.*" Let us examine the truth of the other, and ſee whether he is not likewiſe *full of trouble.*

And here we muſt not take our account from the flattering outſide of things, which are generally ſet off with a glittering appearance enough, eſpecially in what is called *higher life.* Nor can we ſafely truſt the evidence of ſome of the more merry and thoughtleſs amongſt us, who are ſo ſet upon the enjoyment of life, as ſeldom to reflect upon the troubles of it ——or who, perhaps, becauſe they are not yet come to this portion of their inheritance, imagine it is not their common lot.——Nor, laſtly, are we to form an idea of it from the deluſive ſtories of a few of the moſt proſperous paſſengers, who have fortunately ſailed through, and eſcaped the rougher toils and diſtreſſes. But we are to take our account from a cloſe ſurvey of human life, and the real face of things, ſtript of every thing that can palliate or gild it over. We muſt hear the general complaint of all ages, and read the hiſtories of mankind. If we look into them, and examine them to the bottom, what do they contain but the hiſtory of ſad and uncomfortable paſſages, which a good natured man cannot read but with oppreſſion of ſpirits?——Conſider the dreadful ſucceſſion of wars in one part or other of the earth, perpetuated from one century to another with ſo little intermiſſion, that mankind have ſcarce had time to breathe from them, ſince ambition firſt came into the world——Conſider the horrid effects of them in all thoſe barbarous devaſtations, we read

of, where whole nations have been put to the ſword, or have been driven out to nakedneſs and famine, to make room for new comers——Conſider how great a part of our ſpecies, in all ages down to this, have been trod under the feet of cruel and capricious tyrants, who would neither hear their cries, nor pity their diſtreſſes——Conſider ſlavery,——what it is, ——how bitter a draught, and how many millions have been made to drink of it;——which if it can poiſon all earthly happineſs when exerciſed barely upon their bodies, what muſt it be, when it comprehends both the ſlavery of body and mind;——To conceive this, look into the hiſtory of the Romiſh church and her tyrants (or rather executioners) who ſeem to have taken pleaſure in the pangs and convulſions of their fellow-creatures.—Examine the inquiſition, here the melancholy notes ſounded in every cell.——Conſider the anguiſh of mock trials, and the exquiſite tortures conſequent thereupon, mercileſsly inflicted upon the unfortunate, where the racked and weary ſoul has ſo often wiſhed to take its leave—but cruelly not ſuffered to depart.—Conſider how many of theſe helpleſs wretches have been haled from thence, in all periods of this tyrannic uſurpation, to undergo the maſſacres and flames to which a falſe and a bloody religion has condemned them.

If this ſad hiſtory and detail of the more public cauſes of the miſeries of man are not ſufficient, let us behold him in another light with reſpect to the more private cauſes of them, and ſee whether he is not full of trouble likewiſe there, and almoſt born to it as naturally as the ſparks fly upwards. If we con-

ſider man as a creature full of wants and neceſſities (whether real or imaginary) which he is not able to ſupply of himſelf, what a train of diſappointments, vexations and dependencies are to be ſeen, iſſuing from thence to perplex and make his being uneaſy! ——How many joſtlings and hard ſtruggles do we undergo, in making our way in the world!——How barbarouſly held back!——How often and baſely overthrown, in aiming only at getting bread!——How many of us never attain it——at leaſt not comfortably,—but, from various unknown cauſes—eat it all our lives long in bitterneſs!

If we ſhift the ſcene, and look upwards, towards thoſe whoſe ſituation in life ſeems to place them above the ſorrows of this kind, yet where are they exempt from others? Do not all ranks and conditions of men meet with ſad accidents and numberleſs calamities in other reſpects, which often make them go heavily all their lives long!

How many fall into chronicle infirmities, which render both their days and nights reſtleſs and unſupportable?—How many of the higheſt rank are tore up with ambition, or ſoured with diſappointments; and how many more, from a thouſand ſecret cauſes of diſquiet pine away in ſilence, and owe their deaths to ſorrow and dejection of heart?—If we caſt our eyes upon the loweſt claſs and condition of life,—the ſcene is more melancholy ſtill.—Millions of our fellow-creatures, born to no inheritance but poverty and trouble, forced by the neceſſity of their lots to drudgery and painful employments, and hard ſet with that too, to get enough to keep themſelves and families alive—

So that, upon the whole, when we have examined the true ſtate and condition of human life, and have made ſome allowances for a few fugacious, deceitful pleaſures, there is ſcarce any thing to be found which contradicts Job's deſcription of it—Whichever way we look abroad, we ſee ſome legible characters of what God firſt denounced againſt us, "That in ſorrow we ſhould eat our bread, till we "return to the ground from whence we were ta-"ken *."

But ſome one will ſay, Why are we thus to be put out of love with human life? To what purpoſe is it to expoſe the dark ſide of it to us, or enlarge upon the infirmities which are natural, and conſequently out of our power to redreſs!

I anſwer, That the ſubject is nevertheleſs of great importance, ſince it is neceſſary every creature ſhould underſtand his preſent ſtate and condition, to put him in mind of behaving ſuitably to it.—Does not an impartial ſurvey of man——the holding up this glaſs to ſhow him his defects and natural infirmities, naturally tend to cure his pride, and clothe him with humility, which is a dreſs that beſt becomes a ſhort-lived and a wretched creature?—Does not the conſideration of the ſhortneſs of our life convince us of the wiſdom of dedicating ſo ſmall a portion to the great purpoſes of eternity?

Laſtly, When we reflect that this ſpan of life, ſhort as it is, is chequered with ſo many troubles, that there is nothing in this world ſprings up, or can

* N. B. Moſt of theſe reflections upon the miſeries of life are taken from Woolaſton.

be enjoyed without a mixture of ſorrow; how inſenſibly does it incline us to turn our eyes and affections from ſo gloomy a proſpect, and fix them upon that happier country, where afflictions cannot follow us, and where GOD will wipe away all tears from off our faces for ever and ever! Amen.

kind to all mankind; follow him into his own houſe, may be you ſee a tyrant, moroſe and ſavage to all whoſe happineſs depends upon his kindneſs. A third, in his general behaviour is found to be generous, diſintereſted, humane, and friendly:—hear but the ſad hiſtory of the friendleſs orphans, too credulouſly truſting all their little ſubſtance into his hands, and he ſhall appear more ſordid, more pitileſs and unjuſt than the injured themſelves have bitterneſs to paint him. Another ſhall be charitable to the poor, uncharitable in his cenſures and opinions of all the reſt of the world beſides;——temperate in his appetites, intemperate in his tongue;——ſhall have too much conſcience and religion to cheat the man who truſts him, and, perhaps, as far as the buſineſs of debtor and creditor extends, ſhall be juſt and ſcrupulous to the uttermoſt mite: yet, in matters of full as great concern, where he is to have the handling of the party's reputation and good name——the deareſt, the tendereſt property the man has—he will do him irreparable damage, and rob him there without meaſure or pity.

And this ſeems to be that particular piece of inconſiſtency and contradiction which the text is levelled at, in which the words ſeem ſo pointed, as if St. James had known more flagrant inſtances of this kind of deluſion, than what had fallen under the obſervation of any of the reſt of the apoſtles; he being more remarkably vehement and copious upon that ſubject than any other.

Doubtleſs ſome of his converts had been notoriouſly wicked and licentious in this remorſeleſs prac-

pretend to have any, and yet be of niceſt honour, conſcientiouſly juſt and fair in all his dealings. And here it is that men generally betray themſelves, deceiving, as the apoſtle ſays, their own hearts; of which the inſtances are ſo various, in one degree or other, throughout human life, that one might ſafely ſay, the bulk of mankind live in ſuch a contradiction to themſelves, that there is no character ſo hard to be met with as one, which, upon a critical examination, will appear altogether uniform, and in every point conſiſtent with itſelf.

If ſuch a contraſt was only obſervable in the different ſtages of a man's life, it would ceaſe to be either a matter of wonder or of juſt reproach. Age, experience, and much reflection, may naturally enough be ſuppoſed to alter a man's ſenſe of things, and ſo entirely to transform him, that not only in outward appearances, but in the very caſt and turn of his mind, he may be as unlike and different from the man he was twenty or thirty years ago, as he ever was from any thing of his own ſpecies. This, I ſay, is naturally to be accounted for, and in ſome caſes might be praiſe worthy too; but the obſervation is to be made of men in the ſame period of their lives, that in the ſame day, ſometimes in the very ſame action, they are utterly inconſiſtent and irreconcilable with themſelves.——Look at a man in one light, and he ſhall ſeem wiſe, penetrating, diſcreet, and brave; behold him in another point of view, and you ſee a creature all over folly and indiſcretion, weak and timorous as cowardice and indiſcretion can make him. A man ſhall appear gentle, courteous, and benevo-

lent to all mankind; follow him into his own houſe, may be you ſee a tyrant, moroſe and ſavage to all whoſe happineſs depends upon his kindneſs. A third, in his general behaviour is found to be generous, diſintereſted, humane, and friendly:—hear but the ſad ſtory of the friendleſs orphans, too credulouſly truſting all their little ſubſtance into his hands, and he ſhall appear more ſordid, more pitileſs and unjuſt than the injured themſelves have bitterneſs to paint him. Another ſhall be charitable to the poor, uncharitable in his cenſures and opinions of all the reſt of the world beſides;——temperate in his appetites, intemperate in his tongue;——ſhall have too much conſcience and religion to cheat the man who truſts him, and, perhaps, as far as the buſineſs of debtor and creditor extends, ſhall be juſt and ſcrupulous to the uttermoſt mite: yet, in matters of full as great concern, where he is to have the handling of the party's reputation and good name——the deareſt, the tendereſt property the man has—he will do him irreparable damage, and rob him there without meaſure or pity.

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Doubtleſs ſome of his converts had been notoriouſly wicked and licentious in this remorſeleſs prac-

tice of defamation and evil-ſpeaking. Perhaps the holy man, though ſpotleſs as an angel (for no character is too ſacred for calumny to blacken), had grievouſly ſuffered himſelf, and, as his bleſſed Maſter foretold him, had been cruelly reviled, and evil *ſpoken* of.

All his labours in the goſpel, his unaffected and perpetual ſolicitude for the preſervation of his flock, his watchines and faſtings, his poverty, has natural ſimplicity and innocence of life, *all* perhaps were not enough to defend him from this unruly weapon, ſo full of deadly poiſon. And what in all likelihood might move his ſorrow and indignation more, ſome who ſeemed the moſt devout and zealous of all his converts, were the moſt mercileſs and uncharitable in that reſpect: having a form of godlineſs, full of bitter envyings and ſtrife.

With ſuch it is that he expoſtulates ſo largely in the third chapter of his epiſtle: and there is ſomething in his vivacity, tempered with ſuch affection and concern, as well ſuited the character of an inſpired man. My brethren, ſays the apoſtle, theſe things ought not to be.——The wiſdom that is from above is pure, peaceable, gentle, full of mercy, without partiality, without hypocriſy. The wiſdom from above—that heavenly religion which I have preached to you, is pure, alike and conſiſtent with itſelf in all its parts; like its great Author, 'tis univerſally kind and benevolent in all caſes and circumſtances. Its firſt glad tidings were peace upon earth, good-will towards men; its chief-corner ſtone, its moſt diſtinguiſhing character is love, that kind principle

which brought it down, in the pure exercise of which consists the chief enjoyment of heaven from whence it came. But this practice, my brethren, cometh not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish, full of confusion and every evil work. Reflect then a moment; can a fountain send forth, at the same place, sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive-berries: either a vine, figs; Lay your hands upon your hearts, and let your consciences speak.——Ought not the same just principle, which restrains you from cruelty and wrong in one case equally to withold you from it in another?—Should not charity and good-will, like the principle of life circulating through the smallest vessels in every member, ought it not to operate as regularly upon you, throughout, as well upon your words as upon your actions?

If a man is wise and endued with knowledge, let him show it, out of a good conversation, with meekness of wisdom. But——if any man amongst you seemeth to be religious——seemeth to be,——for truly religious he cannot be,—and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.—This is the full force of St. James's reasoning, upon which I have dwelt the more, it being the foundation, upon which is grounded this clear decision of the matter left us in the text. In which the apostle seems to have set the two characters of a saint and a slanderer at such variance, that one would have thought they could never have had a heart to have met together again. But there are no alliances too strange for this world.—How many

may we obſerve every day, even of the gentler ſex, as well as our own, who, without conviction of doing much wrong, in the midſt of a full career of calumny and defamation, riſe up punctually at the ſtated hour of prayer, leave the cruel ſtory half untold till they return,——go,——and kneel down before the throne of Heaven, thank GOD that he had not made them like others, and that his Holy Spirit had enabled them to perform the duties of the day, in ſo Chriſtian and conſcientious a manner?

This deluſive itch for ſlander, too common in all ranks of people, whether to gratify a little ungenerous reſentment,——whether, oftener, out of a principle of levelling, from a narrowneſs and poverty of ſoul, ever impatient of merit and ſuperiority in others,—whether from a mean ambition, or the inſatiate luſt of being witty (a talent in which ill-nature and malice are no ingredients)—or, laſtly, whether from a natural cruelty of diſpoſition, abſtracted from all views and conſiderations of ſelf: to which one, or whether to all jointly, we are indebted for this contagious malady, thus much is certain, from whatever ſeeds it ſprings, the growth and progreſs of it are as deſtructive to, as they are unbecoming a civilized people. To paſs a hard and ill-natured reflection, upon an undeſigning action; to invent, or which is equally bad, to propagate, a vexatious report without colour and grounds; to plunder an innocent man of his character and good name, a jewel which, perhaps, he has ſtarved himſelf to purchaſe, and probably would hazard his life to ſecure; to rob him at the ſame time of his happineſs and peace of

mind, perhaps his bread,——the bread my be,
a virtuous family; and in all this, as Solomon says
the madman who casteth fire-brands, arrows
death, and saith, Am I not in sport?—all this out
wantonness, and oftener from worse motives;
whole appears such a complication of badness as
quires no words or warmth of fancy to aggrav
Pride, treachery, envy, hypocrisy, malice, cru
and self-love, may have been said, in one shape
other, to have occasioned all the frauds and misch
that ever happened in the world; but the char
against a coincidence of them all in one person,
so many, that one would have supposed the cha
ter of a common slanderer as rare and difficult a
duction in nature as that of a great genius, wh
seldom happens above once in an age.

But, whatever was the case when St. James w
his epistle, we have been very successful in l
days, and have found out the art, by a proper
nagement of light and shade, to compound all t
vices together, so as to give body and strength to
whole, whilst no one but a discerning artist is abl
discover the labours that join in finishing the pict
—And indeed, like many other bad originals in
world——it stands in need of all the disguise it
——For who could be enamoured of a charac
made up of so loathsome a compound,—could
behold it naked,—in its crooked and deformed sh
—with all its natural and detested infirmities
open to public view?

And therefore, it were to be wished, that
could do in this malignant case of the mind,—w

is generally done, for the public good, in the more malignant and epidemical cauſes of the body,—that is—when they are found infectious,—to write a hiſtory of the diſtemper,——and aſcertain the ſymptoms of the malady, ſo that every one might know whom he might venture to go near, with tolerable ſafety to himſelf.——But, alas! the ſymptoms of this appear in ſo many ſtrange and contradictory ſhapes, and vary ſo wonderfully with the temper and habit of the patient, that they are not to be claſſed—or reduced to any one regular ſyſtem.

Ten thouſand are the vehicles in which this deadly poiſon is prepared and communicated to the world,—and, by ſome artful hands, 'tis done by ſo ſubtle and nice an infuſion, that it is not to be taſted or diſcovered but by its effects.

How frequently is the honeſty and integrity of a man diſpoſed of by a ſmile or a ſhrug?—How many good and generous actions have been ſunk into oblivion by a diſtruſtful look,—or ſtampt with the imputation of proceeding from bad motives, by a myſterious and ſeaſonable whiſper?

Look into companies of thoſe whoſe gentle natures ſhould diſarm them,——we ſhall find no better account.——How large a portion of chaſtity is ſent out of the world by diſtant hints,—nodded away, and cruelly winked into ſuſpicion, by the envy of thoſe who are paſt all temptation of it themſelves;—How often does the reputation of a helpleſs creature bleed by report—which the party who is at the pains to propagate it, beholds with much pity and fellow-feeling,—that ſhe is heartily ſorry for it,—hopes in

God it is not true;—however, as Archbiſhop Tillotſon wittily obſerves upon it, is reſolved, in the mean time, to give the report her paſs, that at leaſt it may have fair play to take its fortune in the world.—to be believed or not, according to the charity of thoſe into whoſe hands it ſhall happen to fall.

So fruitful is this vice in variety of expedients, to ſatiate as well as diſguiſe itſelf. But if theſe ſmoother weapons cut ſo ſore,—what ſhall we ſay of open and unblushing ſcandal—ſubjected to no caution——tied down to no reſtraints?—If the one, like an arrow ſhot in the dark, does nevertheleſs ſo much ſecret miſchief,—this, like the peſtilence which rageth at noon-day, ſweeps all before it, levelling without diſtinction the good and the bad: a thouſand fall beſide it, and ten thouſand on its right hand,—they fall—ſo rent and torn in this tender part of them, ſo unmercifully butchered, as ſometimes never to recover, either of the wounds—or the anguiſh of heart ——which they have occaſioned.——

But there is nothing ſo bad which will not admit of ſomething to be ſaid in its defence.

And here it may be aſked,—Whether the inconveniencies and ill effects which the world feels from the licentiouſneſs of this practice—are not ſufficiently counterbalanced by the real influence it has upon men's lives and conduct?—That if there was no evil ſpeaking in the world, thouſands would be encouraged to do ill,——and would ruſh into many indecorums, like a horſe into the battle,—were they ſure to eſcape the tongues of men.

That if we take a general view of the world,——

we ſhall find that a great deal of virtue,—at leaſt of the outward appearance of it,—is not ſo much from any fixed principle, as the terror of what the world will ſay,——and the liberty it will take upon the occaſions we ſhall give.

That, if we deſcend to particulars, numbers are every day taking more pains to be well ſpoken of,—than what would actually enable them to live ſo as to deſerve it.

That there are many, of both ſexes, who can ſupport life well enough without honour or chaſtity,—who, without reputation (which is but the opinion which the world has of the matter), would hide their heads in ſhame, and ſink down in utter deſpair of happineſs.—No doubt the tongue is a weapon, which does chaſtiſe many indecorums which the laws of men will not reach,—and keeps many in awe——whom conſcience will not; and where the caſe is indiſputably flagrant,—the ſpeaking of it in ſuch words as it deſerves,—ſcarce comes within the prohibition ——In many caſes, 'tis hard to expreſs ourſelves ſo as to fix a diſtinction betwixt oppoſite characters,—and ſometimes it may be as much a debt we owe to virtue, and as great a piece of juſtice, to expoſe a vicious character, and paint it in its proper colours,—as it is to ſpeak well of the deſerving, and deſcribe his particular virtues.—And, indeed, when we inflict this puniſhment upon the bad, merely out of principle, and without indulgence to any private paſſion of our own,—'tis a caſe which happens ſo ſeldom, that one might venture to except it.

However, to thoſe, who in this objection are real-

ly concerned for the cauſe of virtue, I cannot help recommending what would much more effectually ſerve her intereſt, and be a ſurer token of their zeal and attachment to her: and that is,——in all ſuch plain inſtances where it ſeems to be a duty to fix a diſtinction betwixt the good and the bad,—to let their actions ſpeak it inſtead of their words, or at leaſt to let them both ſpeak one language. We all of us talk ſo loud againſt vicious characters, and are ſo unanimous in our cry againſt them,—that an unexperienced man, who only truſted his ears, would imagine the whole world was in an uproar about it, and that mankind were all aſſociating together to hunt vice utterly out of the world——Shift the ſcene—and let him behold the reception which vice meets with,—he will ſee the conduct and behaviour of the world towards it, ſo oppoſite to their declarations,—he will find all he heard, ſo contradicted by what he ſaw,—as to leave him in doubt which of his ſenſes he is to truſt,—or in which of the two caſes mankind were really in earneſt. Was there virtue enough in the world to make a general ſtand againſt this contradiction,—that is,—was every one who deſerved to be ill ſpoken of—ſure to be ill looked on too;—was it a certain conſequence of the loſs of a man's character,——to loſe his friends,—to loſe the advantages of his birth and fortune,—and thenceforth be univerſally ſhunned, univerſally ſlighted.

Was no quality a ſhelter againſt the indecorums of the other ſex, but was every woman, without diſtinction——who had juſtly forfeited her reputation,

—from that moment was ſhe ſure to forfeit likewiſe all claim to civility and reſpect,—

Or, in a word—could it be eſtabliſhed as a law in our ceremonial,——that wherever characters in either ſex were become notorious,—it ſhould be deemed infamous, either to pay or receive a viſit from them, and the door were to be ſhut againſt them in all the public places, till they had ſatisfied the world by giving teſtimony of a better life——A few ſuch plain and honeſt maxims faithfully put in practice,—would force us upon ſome degree of reformation. Till this is done,—it avails little that we have no mercy upon them with our tongues, ſince they eſcape without feeling any other inconvenience.

We all cry out that the world is corrupt—and I fear, too juſtly;—but we never reflect, what we have to thank for it, and that it is our open countenance of vice, which gives the lie to our private cenſures of it, that is its chief protection and encouragement.——To thoſe however, who ſtill believe that evil-ſpeaking is ſome terror to evil-doers, one may anſwer, as a great man has done upon the occaſion,—That after all our exhortations againſt it,—'tis not to be feared, but that there will be evil-ſpeaking enough left in the world to chaſtiſe the guilty,—and we may ſafely truſt them to an ill-natured world, that there will be no failure of juſtice upon this ſcore.——The paſſions of men are pretty ſevere executioners, and to them let us leave this ungrateful taſk;—and rather ourſelves endeavour to cultivate that more friendly one, recommended by the apoſtle, of letting all bitterneſs, and wrath, and

clamour, and evil-ſpeaking, be put away from us,—of being kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as GOD for Chriſt's ſake forgave us. Amen.

SERMON XII.

Joſeph's Hiſtory conſidered.

Forgiveneſs of Injuries.

GENESIS L. 15.

And when Joſeph's brethren ſaw that their father was dead, they ſaid, Joſeph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.

THERE are few inſtances of the exerciſe of particular virtues which ſeem harder to attain to, or which appear more amiable and engaging in themſelves, than thoſe of moderation and the forgiveneſs of injuries: and when the temptations againſt them happen to be heightened by the bitterneſs of a provocation on one hand, and the fairneſs of an opportunity to retaliate on the other, the inſtances *then* are truly great and heroic. The words of the TEXT (which are the conſultation of the ſons of Jacob amongſt themſelves upon their father Iſrael's death, when, becauſe it was in Joſeph's power to revenge the deadly injury they had formerly done him, they concluded, in courſe, that it was in his intention)—will, lead us to a beautiful example of this kind, in the character and

behaviour of Joſeph conſequent thereupon; and as it ſeems a perfect and very engaging pattern of forbearance, it may not be improper to make it ſerve for the ground-work of a diſcourſe upon that ſubject.—The whole tranſaction, from the firſt occaſion given by Joſeph in his youth, to this laſt act of remiſſion, at the concluſion of his life, may be ſaid to be a maſterpiece of hiſtory. There is, not only in the manner throughout, ſuch a happy, though uncommon mixture of ſimplicity and grandeur, which is a double character ſo hard to be united, that it is ſeldom to be met with in compoſitions merely human,——but it is likewiſe related with the greateſt variety of tender and affecting circumſtances, which would afford matter for reflections uſeful for the conduct of almoſt every part and ſtage of a man's life.——But as the words of the text, as well as the intention and compaſs of this diſcourſe, particularly confine me to ſpeak only to one point, namely the forgiveneſs of injuries, it will be proper only to conſider ſuch circumſtances of the ſtory, as will place this inſtance of it in its juſt light; and then proceed to make a more general uſe of the great example of moderation and forbearance, which it ſets before us.

It ſeems ſtrange at firſt ſight, that after the ſons of Jacob had fallen into Joſeph's power, when they were forced by the foreneſs of the famine to go down into Egypt to buy corn, and had found him too good a man even to expoſtulate with them for an injury, which he ſeemed then to have digeſted and piouſly to have reſolved into the over-ruling providence of God, for the preſervation of much people, how

they could ever after queſtion the uprightneſs of his intentions, or entertain the leaſt ſuſpicion that his reconciliation was diſſembled. Would not one have imagined, that the man who had diſcovered ſuch a goodneſs of ſoul, that he ſought where to weep, becauſe he could not bear the ſtruggles of a counterfeited harſhneſs, could ever be ſuſpected afterwards of intending a real one;—and that he only waited till their father Iſrael's death to requite them all the evil which they had done unto him? What ſtill adds to this difficulty is, that his affectionate manner in making himſelf known to them,——his goodneſs in forbearing not only to reproach them for the injury they had formerly done him, but extenuating and excuſing the fault to themſelves,——his comforting and ſpeaking kindly to them, and ſeconding all with the tendereſt marks of an undiſguiſed forgiveneſs, in falling upon their necks and weeping aloud, that all the houſe of Pharaoh heard him;——that moreover, this behaviour of Joſeph could not appear to them to be the effect of any warm and ſudden tranſport, which might as ſuddenly give way to other reflections, but that it evidently ſprung from a ſettled principle of uncommon generoſity in his nature, which was above the temptation of making uſe of an opportunity for revenge, which the courſe of God's providence had put into his hands for better purpoſes; and what might ſtill ſeem to confirm this, was the evidence of his actions to them afterwards, in bringing them and all their houſehold up out of Canaan, and placing them near him in the land of Goſhen, the richeſt part of Egypt, where they had had ſo many

years experience of his love and kindneſs.——And yet it is plain all this did not clear his motive from ſuſpicion, or at leaſt themſelves from ſome apprehenſions of a change in his conduct towards them. And was it not that the whole tranſaction was written under the direction of the Spirit of truth, and that other hiſtorians concur in doing juſtice to Joſeph's character, and ſpeak of him as a compaſſionate and merciful man, one would be apt, you would ſay, to imagine here, that Moſes might poſſibly have omitted ſome circumſtances of Joſeph's behaviour, which had alarmed his brethren, betwixt the time of his firſt reconciliation and that of their father's death. —For they could not be ſuſpicious of his intentions without ſome cauſe, and fear where no fear was.— But does not a guilty conſcience often do ſo; and, though it has the grounds, yet wants the power to think itſelf ſafe?

And could we look into the hearts of thoſe who know they deſerve ill, we ſhould find many an inſtance, where a kindneſs from an injured hand, where there was leaſt reaſon to expect one, has ſtruck deeper, and touched the heart with a degree of remorſe and concern, which perhaps no ſeverity or reſentment could have reached. This reflection will in ſome meaſure help to explain this difficulty which occurs in the ſtory. For it is obſervable, that when the injury they had done their brother was firſt committed, and the fact was freſh upon their minds, and moſt likely to have filled them with a ſenſe of guilt, we find no acknowledgment or complaint to one another, of ſuch a load as one might imagine it had

laid upon them; and, from that event, through a long courſe of years, to the time they had gone down to Egypt, we read not once of any ſorrow or compunction of heart which they had felt, during all that time, for what they had done. They had artfully impoſed upon their parent—and (as men are ingenious caſuiſts in their own affairs) they had, probably as artfully impoſed upon their own conſciences;—— and poſſibly had never impartially reflected upon the action, or conſidered it in its juſt light, till the many acts of their brother's love and kindneſs had brought it before them, with all the circumſtances of aggravation which his behaviour would naturally give it.—They then began maturely to conſider what they had done—That they had firſt undeſervedly hated him in his childhood for that which, if it was a ground of complaint, ought rather to have been charged upon the indiſcretion of the parent, than conſidered as a fault in him. That, upon a more juſt examination, and a better knowledge of their brother, they had wanted even that pretence.——It was not a blind partiality which ſeemed firſt to have directed their father's affection to him——though then they thought ſo;——for doubtleſs ſo much goodneſs and benevolence as ſhone forth in his nature, now that he was a man, could not lie all of it ſo deep concealed in his youth, but the ſagacity of a parent's eye would diſcover it, and that in courſe their enmity towards him was founded upon that which ought to have won their eſteem—That if he had incautiouſly added envy to their ill-will in reporting his dreams, which preſaged his future greatneſs, it was but the indiſcretion

of a youth unpractiſed in the world, who had not yet found out the art of diſſembling his hopes and expectations, and was ſcarce arrived at an age to comprehend there was ſuch a thing in the world as envy and ambition;——that if ſuch offences in a brother, ſo fairly carried their own excuſes with them, what could they ſay for themſelves, when they conſidered it was for this they had almoſt unanimouſly conſpired to rob him of his life,——and, though they were happily reſtrained from ſhedding his blood upon Reuben's remonſtrance, that they had nevertheleſs all the guilt of the intention to anſwer for?——That whatever motive it was which then ſtayed their hands, their conſciences told them it could not be a good one, ſince they had changed the ſentence for one no leſs cruel in itſelf, and what to an ingenious nature was worſe than death, to be ſold for a ſlave: the one was common to all,——the other only to the unfortunate. That it was not compaſſion which then took place; for had there been any way open to that, his tears and entreaties muſt have found it, when they ſaw the anguiſh of his ſoul, when he beſought and they would not hear—That if aught ſtill could heighten the remorſe of baniſhing a youth without provocation, for ever from his country and the protection of his parent, to be expoſed naked to the buffetings of the world, and the rough hand of ſome mercileſs maſter, they would find it in this reflection, "That the many "afflictions and hardſhips, which they might na- "turally have expected would overtake the lad, con-

" ſequent upon this action, had actually fallen upon " him."

That beſides the anguiſh of ſuſpected virtue, he had felt that of a priſon, where he had long lain neglected in a friendleſs condition; and where the affliction of it was rendered ſtill ſharper by the daily expectation of being remembered by Pharaoh's chief butler, and the diſappointment of finding himſelf ungratefully forgotten.——And though Moſes tells us, that he found favour in the ſight of the keeper of the priſon, yet the Pſalmiſt acquaints us that his ſufferings were ſtill grievous: *That his feet were hurt with fetters,* and the iron entered *even into his ſoul.* And no doubt, his brethren thought the ſenſe of their injury muſt have entered at the ſame time, and was then rivetted and fixed in his mind for ever.

It is natural to imagine they argued and reflected in this manner; and there ſeems no neceſſity of ſeeking for the reaſon of their uneaſineſs and diſtruſt in Joſeph's conduct, or any other external cauſe, ſince the inward workings of their own minds will eaſily account for the evil they apprehended.——A ſeries of benefits and kindneſſes from the man they had injured, gradually heightened the idea of their own guilt, till at length they could not conceive how the treſpaſs could be forgiven them: it appeared with ſuch freſh circumſtances of aggravation, that though they were convinced his reſentment ſlept, yet they thought it only ſlept, and was likely ſome time or other to awake, and moſt probably then, that their father was dead, when the conſideration of involving him in his revenge had ceaſed, and all the duty and

compaſſion he owed to the grey hairs and happineſs of a parent was diſcharged and buried with him.

This they expreſs in the conſultation held amongſt themſelves in the words of the text; and in the following verſe we find them accordingly ſending to him to deprecate the evil they dreaded; and, either becauſe they thought their father's name more powerful than their own, in this application—or rather, that they might not commit a freſh injury in ſeeming to ſuſpect his ſincerity, they pretend their father's direction; for we read they ſent meſſengers unto Joſeph, ſaying, Thy father did command before he died,——So ſhall ye ſay unto Joſeph,——"Forgive, I pray thee now, the treſpaſs of thy brethren "and their ſin; for they did unto thee evil: and "now we pray thee, forgive the treſpaſs of the ſervants of the GOD of thy father." The addreſs was not without art, and was conceived in ſuch words as ſeemed to ſuggeſt an argument in their favour,—as if it would not become him, who was but a fellow-ſervant of their father's GOD, to harbour revenge, or uſe the power their father's GOD had given him againſt his children. Nor was there a reaſon in any thing, but the fears of a guilty conſcience, to apprehend it, as appears from the reception which the addreſs met, which was ſuch as beſpoke an uncommon goodneſs of nature; for when they thus ſpake unto him,——the hiſtorian ſays he wept. Sympathy for the ſorrow and diſtreſs of ſo many ſons of his father, now all in his power,—— pain at ſo open and ingenuous a confeſſion of their guilt,——concern and pity for the long puniſhment

they muſt have endured by ſo ſtubborn a remorſe, which ſo many years ſeemed not to have diminiſhed. The affecting idea of their condition, which had ſeemed to reduce them to the neceſſity of holding up their hands for mercy, when they had loſt their protector,——ſo many tender paſſions ſtruggling together, at once overcame him;—he burſt into tears which ſpoke, what language could not attempt. It will be needleſs therefore to enlarge any further upon this incident, which furniſhes us with ſo beautiful a picture of a compaſſionate and forgiving temper, that I think no words can heighten it;—but rather let us endeavour to find out by what helps and reaſoning, the patriarch might be ſuppoſed to attain to ſo exalted and engaging a virtue. Perhaps you will ſay, "That one ſo thoroughly convinced, as Joſeph "ſeemed to be, of the overruling providence of GOD, "which ſo evidently makes uſe of the malice and "paſſions of men, and turns them as inſtruments in "his hands to work his own righteouſneſs, and bring "about his eternal decrees,—and of which his own "hiſtory was ſo plain an inſtance, could not have "far to ſeek for an argument to forgiveneſs, or feel "much ſtruggle in ſtifling an inclination againſt it."——But let any man lay his hand upon his heart, and ſay, how often in inſtances, where anger and revenge had ſeized him, has this doctrine come in to his aid?——In the bitterneſs of an affront, how often has it calmed his paſſions, and checked the fury of his reſentment?——True and univerſally believed as the doctrine is amongſt us, it ſeldom does this ſervice, though ſo well ſuited for it, and like

ſome wiſe ſtatute, never executed or thought of, though in full force, lies as unheeded as if it was not in being.

'Tis plain 'twas otherwiſe in the preſent inſtance, where Joſeph ſeems to acknowledge the influence it had upon him, in his declaration,——"*That* it was "not they, but GOD who ſent him." And does not this virtue ſhine the brighteſt in ſuch a pious application of the perſuaſion to ſo benevolent a purpoſe?

Without derogating from the merit of his forbearance, he might be ſuppoſed to have caſt an eye upon the change and uncertainty of human affairs which he had ſeen himſelf, and which had convinced him we were all in one another's power by turns, and ſtand in need of one another's pity and compaſſion;——and that, to reſtrain the cruelties, and ſtop the inſolences of men's reſentments, GOD has ſo ordered it in the courſe of his providence, that, very often in this world—our revenges return upon our own heads, and men's violent dealings upon their own pates.

And, beſides theſe conſiderations,——that, in generouſly forgiving an enemy, he was the trueſt friend to his own character, and ſhould gain more to it by ſuch an inſtance of ſubduing his ſpirit, than if he had taken a city.—The brave only know how to forgive;——it is the moſt refined and generous pitch of virtue human nature can arrive at.——*Coward have done good and kind actions,——cowards have even fought——nay ſometimes even conquered;—but a coward never forgave.—It is not in his nature

*Chriſtian Hero.

—the power of doing it flows only from a ſtrength and greatneſs of ſoul, conſcious of its own force and ſecurity, and above the little temptations of reſenting every fruitleſs attempt to interrupt its happineſs. Moreover, ſetting aſide all conſiderations of his character—in paſſing by an injury, he was the trueſt friend likewiſe to his own happineſs and peace of mind; he never felt that fretful ſtorm of paſſions, which hurry men on to acts of revenge, or ſuffered thoſe pangs of horror which purſue it. Thus he might poſſibly argue, and no farther;——for want of a better foundation and better helps, he could raiſe the building no higher;—to carry it upwards to its perfection, we muſt call in to our aid that more ſpiritual and refined doctrine introduced upon it by CHRIST; namely, to forgive a brother, not only to ſeven times, but to ſeventy times ſeven——that is, without limitation.

In this, the excellency of the goſpel is ſaid, by ſome one, to appear with a remarkable advantage; "That a Chriſtian is as much diſpoſed to love and "ſerve you, when your enemy, as the mere moral "man can be, when he is your friend."——This, no doubt, is the tendency of his religion;——but, how often, or in what degrees it ſucceeds,——how nearly the practice keeps pace with the theory, the all-wiſe Searcher into the hearts of men, alone is able to determine. But it is to be feared, that ſuch great effects are not ſo ſenſibly felt, as a ſpeculative man would expect from ſuch powerful motives; and there is many a Chriſtian ſociety which would be glad to compound amongſt themſelves for ſome leſſer

degrees of perfection on one hand, were they ſure to be exempted, on the other, from the bad effects of thoſe fretful paſſions which are ever taking, as well as ever giving, the occaſions of ſtrife; the beginnings of which Solomon aptly compares to the letting out of waters, the opening a breach, which no one can be ſure to ſtop till it has proceeded to the moſt fatal events.

With juſtice therefore might the ſon of Sirach conclude, concerning pride——that ſecret ſtream which adminiſters to the everflowings of reſentments, that it was not made for man, nor furious anger for him that is born of a woman: that the one did not become his ſtation, and that the other was deſtructive to all the happineſs he was intended to receive from it. How miſerably then muſt thoſe men turn tyrants againſt themſelves, as well as others, who grow ſplenetic and revengeful, not only upon the little unavoidable oppoſitions and offences they muſt meet with in the commerce of the world, but upon thoſe which only reach them by report, and accordingly torment their little ſouls, with meditating how to return the injury, before they are certain they have received one? Whether this eager ſenſibility of wrongs and reſentments, ariſes from that general cauſe, to which the ſon of Sirach ſeems to reduce all fierce anger and paſſion; or whether to a certain ſourneſs of temper, which ſtands in every body's way, and therefore ſubject to be often hurt: from whichever cauſe the diſorder ſprings, the advice of the author of the book of Eccleſiaſticus is proper: "Admoniſh a friend, ſays he, it may be

" he hath not done it; and if he have, that he do
" it not again. Admoniſh thy friend, it may be he
" hath not ſaid it; and if he have, that he ſpeak it
" not again. There is that ſlippeth in his ſpeech,
" but not from his heart: and who is he who hath
" not offended with his tongue?"

I cannot help taking notice here of a certain ſpecies of forgiveneſs, which is ſeldom enforced or thought of, and yet is no way below our regard: I mean the forgiveneſs of thoſe, if we may be allowed the expreſſion, whom we have injured ourſelves. One would think that the difficulty of forgiving could only reſt on the ſide of him who has received the wrong; but the truth of the fact is often otherwiſe. The conſciouſneſs of having provoked another's reſentment, often excites the aggreſſor to keep beforehand with the man he has hurt; and not only to hate him for the evil he expects in return, but even to purſue him down, and put it out of his power to make repriſals.

The baſeneſs of this is ſuch, that it is ſufficient to make the ſame obſervation, which was made upon the crime of parricide amongſt the Grecians;——it was ſo black,—their legiſlators did not ſuppoſe it could be committed, and therefore made no law to puniſh it.

SERMON XIII.

Duty of ſetting Bounds to our Deſires.

2 KINGS IV. 13.

And he ſaid unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou haſt been careful for us with all this care;—what is to be done for thee? —wouldſt thou be ſpoken for to the king, or the captain of the hoſt?——And ſhe anſwered, I dwell among mine own people.

THE firſt part of the text is the word which the prophet Elitha puts into the mouth of his ſervant Gehazi, as a meſſage of thanks to the woman of Shunam for her great kindneſs and hoſpitality; of which, after the acknowledgment of his juſt ſenſe, which Gehazi is bid to deliver in the words—"Be- "hold, thou haſt been careful for us with all this "care;"—he directs him to inquire in what manner he may beſt make a return in diſcharge of the obligation——"What ſhall be done for thee? "Wouldſt thou be ſpoken for to the king, or the "captain of the hoſt?" The laſt part of the text is the Shunamite's anſwer, which implies a refuſal of the honour or advantage which the prophet intended to bring upon her by ſuch an application, which

ſhe indirectly expreſſes in her contentment and ſatisfaction with what ſhe enjoyed in her preſent ſtation; "I dwell among mine own people." This inſtance of ſelf-denial in the Shunamite, is but properly the introduction to her ſtory, and gives riſe to that long and very pathetic tranſaction which follows in the ſupernatural grant of a child, which GOD had many years denied her,——the affecting loſs of him as ſoon as he was grown up,—and his reſtoration to life by Eliſha, after he had been ſome time dead; the whole of which, though extremely intereſting, and forming ſuch incidents as would afford ſufficient matter for inſtruction, yet, as it will not fall within the intention of this diſcourſe, I ſhall beg leave at this time barely to conſider thoſe previous circumſtances of it, to which the text confines me; upon which I ſhall enlarge with ſuch reflections as occur, and then proceed to that practical uſe and exhortation, which will naturally fall from it.

We find that after Eliſha had reſcued the diſtreſſed widow and her two ſons from the hands of the creditor, by the miraculous multiplication of her oil,——that he paſſed on to Shunam, where, we read, was a great woman, and ſhe conſtrained him to eat bread; and ſo it was, that as often as he paſſed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. The ſacred hiſtorian ſpeaks barely of her temporal condition and ſtation in life——"That ſhe was a great "woman;" but deſcribes not the more material part of her, her virtues and character, becauſe they were more evidently to be diſcovered from the

tranſaction itſelf; from which it appears, that ſhe was not only wealthy, but likewiſe charitable, and of a very conſiderate turn of mind. For after many repeated invitations and entertainments at her houſe, finding his occaſions called him to a frequent paſſage that way;——ſhe moves her huſband to ſet up and furniſh a lodging for him, with all the conveniencies which the ſimplicity of thoſe times required: "And ſhe ſaid unto her huſband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of GOD, which paſſeth by us continually; let us make him a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall, and let us ſet for him there a bed, and a table, and a ſtool, and a candleſtick; and it ſhall be when he cometh to us, that he ſhall turn in thither."——She perceived he was a holy man,——ſhe had had many opportunities, as he paſſed by them continually, of obſerving his behaviour and deportment, which ſhe had carefully remarked, and ſaw plainly what he was. That the ſanctity and ſimplicity of his manners, ——the ſeverity of his life,——and zeal for the religion of his GOD, and the uncommon fervency of his devotion, when he worſhipped before him, which ſeemed his whole buſineſs and employment upon earth;—all beſpoke him not a man of this world, but one whoſe heart and affections were fixed upon another object, which was dearer and more important to him. But as ſuch outward appearnces may, and often have been counterfeited, ſo that the actions of a man are certainly the only interpreters to be relied on, whether ſuch colours are true or falſe —ſo ſhe had heard that all was of a piece there,

and that he was throughout conſiſtent; that he had never in any one inſtance of his life acted as if he had any views in the affairs of this world, in which he had never intereſted himſelf at all, but where the glory of his GOD, or the good and preſervation of his fellow-creatures, at firſt inclined him: that, in a late inſtance, before he came to Shunam, he had done one of the kindeſt and moſt charitable actions that a good man could have done, in aſſiſting the widow and fatherleſs; and, as the fact was ſingluar, and had juſt happened before her knowledge of him, no doubt ſhe had heard the ſtory with all the tender circumſtances which a true report would give it in his favour; namely, that a certain woman whoſe huſband was lately dead, and had left her with her children in a very helpleſs condition——very deſtitute—and, what was ſtill worſe, charged with a debt ſhe was not able to pay;—that her creditor bore exceeding hard upon her, and finding her little wroth in ſubſtance, was going to take the advantage which the law allowed of ſeizing her two ſons for his bondſmen; ſo that ſhe had not only loſt her huſband, which had made her miſerable enough already, but was going to be bereaved of her children, which were the only comfort and ſupport of her life;——that upon her coming to Eliſha with this ſad ſtory, he was touched with compaſſion for her misfortunes, and had uſed all the power and intereſt which he had with his GOD to relieve and befriend her; which, in an unheard-of manner, by the miraculous increaſe of her oil, which was the only ſubſtance ſhe had left, he had ſo bountifully

effected, as not only to diſentangle her from her difficulties in paying the debt, but withal, what was ſtill more generous, to enable her to live comfortably the remainder of her days. She conſidered, that charity and compaſſion was ſo leading a virtue, and had ſuch an influence upon every other part of a man's character, as to be a ſufficient proof by itſelf of the inward diſpoſition and goodneſs of the heart; but that ſo engaging an inſtance of it as this, exerciſed in ſo kind and ſo ſeaſonable a manner, was a demonſtration of his,—and that he was in truth, what outward circumſtances beſpoke, a holy man of GOD.——As the Shunamite's principle and motive for her hoſpitality to Eliſha was juſt, as it ſprung from an idea of the worth and merit of her gueſt, ſo likewiſe was the manner of doing it kind and conſiderate. It is obſervable, ſhe does not ſolicit her huſband to aſſign him an apartment in her own houſe, but to build him a chamber on the wall apart:—ſhe conſidered,——that true piety wanted no witneſſes, and was always moſt at eaſe when moſt private;——that the tumult and diſtraction of a large family were not fit for the ſilent meditations of ſo holy a man, who would perpetually there meet with ſomething either to interrupt his devotion, or offend the purity of his manners;—that moreover, under ſuch an independent roof, where he could take ſhelter as often as his occaſions required, ſhe thought he might taſte the pleaſure which was natural to man, in poſſeſſing ſomething like what he could call his own,——and, what is no ſmall part of conferring a favour, he would ſcarce feel the

weight of it, or at leaſt much ſeldomer in this manner, than where a daily invitation and repetition of the kindneſs perpetually put him in mind of his obligation. If any thing could ſtill add to this—— it was that it did not appear to be the dry offer of a faint civility, but that it came directly from the heart. There is a nicety in honeſt minds, which *will* not accept of a cold and ſuſpected offer,—and even when it appears to be ſincere and truly meant, there is a modeſty in true merit which knows not how to accept it; and no doubt ſhe had one, if not both theſe difficulties to conquer in their turns.—For we read, that ſhe conſtrained him, and in all likelihood forced his acceptance of it, with all the warmth and friendly openneſs of a humane and hoſpitable temper.

It is with benefits as with injuries in this reſpect, that we do not ſo much weigh the accidental good or evil they do us, as that which they were deſigned to do us;——that is, we conſider no part of them ſo much as their intention. And the prophet's behaviour conſequent upon this, ſhows he beheld it through this medium, or in ſome ſuch advantageous light as I have placed it.

There is no burden ſo heavy to a grateful mind, as a debt of kindneſs unpaid;—and we may believe Eliſha felt it ſo, from the earneſt deſire which he had upon the immediate receipt of this, to diſcharge himſelf of it, which he expreſſes in the text in the warmeſt manner;——"Behold, thou haſt been "careful for us with all this care:—What ſhall be "done for thee? Wouldeſt thou be ſpoken for to

" the king, or the captain of the hoſt ?"—There is a degree of honeſt impatience in the words, ſuch as was natural to a good man, who would not be behind-hand with his benefactor.——But there is one thing which may ſeem ſtrange at firſt ſight, that as her ſtation and condition of life was ſuch, that ſhe appeared rather to have abounded already, than ſtood in want of any thing in this world which ſuch an application could ſupply,——why the prophet ſhould not rather have propoſed ſome ſpiritual advantage, which, as it would better have become the ſanctity of his character on the one hand, ſo, on the other, it would have done a more real and laſting ſervice to his friend.

But we are to reflect, that, in returning favours, we act differently from what we do in conferring them:—in the one caſe we ſimply conſider what is beſt,—in the other, what is moſt acceptable. The reaſon is, that we have a right to act according to our own ideas of what will do the party moſt good, in the caſe where we beſtow a favour;——but, where we return one, we loſe this right, and act according to his conceptions who has obliged us, and endeavour to repay in ſuch a manner as we think is moſt likely to be accepted in diſcharge of the obligation.——So that, though we are not to imagine Eliſha could be wanting in religious duties, as well as wiſhes, to ſo hoſpitable a friend, we may yet ſuppoſe he was directed here by this principle of equity;——and that, in reflecting in what manner he ſhould requite his benefactreſs, he had conſidered, that to one of her affluent condition, who had all the reaſonable com-

forts of an independent life,—if there was any paſſion yet unſatisfied, it muſt certainly be ambition; that though in general it was an irregular appetite, which, in moſt caſes, it was dangerous to gratify, yet in effect it was only ſo far criminal, as the power which is acquired to bad and vicious purpoſes, which it was not likely to be here, from the ſpecimen ſhe had already given of her diſpoſition; which ſhowed that if ſhe did wiſh for an increaſe of wealth or honour, ſhe wiſhed it only, as it would enable her more generouſly to extend her arm in kind offices, and increaſe the power as well as the opportunities of doing good.

In juſtice to Eliſha's motive, which muſt have been good, we muſt ſuppoſe he conſidered his offer in this light; and what principally led him to propoſe it, was the great intereſt which he had with the King of Iſrael at that time, which he had merited by a ſignal ſervice; and as he had no views for himſelf, he thought it could not be employed ſo well as in eſtabliſhing the fortune of one, whoſe virtue might be ſo ſafely truſted with it. It was a juſtifiable prepoſſeſſion in her favour,—though one, not always to be relied on; for there is many a one who, in a moderate ſtation, and with a leſſer degree of power, has behaved with honour and unblemiſhed reputation, and who has even borne the buffeting of adverſe fortune well, and manifeſted great preſence and ſtrength of mind under it, whom nevertheleſs a high exultation has at once overcome, and ſo entirely changed, as if the party had left not only his virtue, but even himſelf behind him.

Whether the Shunamite dreaded to make this dangerous experiment of herſelf,——or, which is more likely, that ſhe had learned to ſet bounds to her deſires, and was too well ſatisfied with her preſent condition to be tempted out of it, ſhe declines the offer in the cloſe of the text,——" I *dwell* a-" mongſt my own *people*;" as if ſhe had ſaid, " The " intended kindneſs is far from being ſmall, but it " is not uſeful to me; I live here, as thou art a wit-" neſs, in peace, in a contented obſcurity;——not " ſo high as to provoke envy, nor ſo low as to be " trodden down and deſpiſed. In this ſafe and " middle ſtate, as I have lived amongſt my own " people, ſo let me die, out of the reach, both of " the cares and glories of the world.—It is fit, O " holy man of GOD! that I learn ſome time or " other to ſet bounds to my deſires; and if I cannot " fix them now, when I have already more than my " wants require, when ſhall I hope to do it?—Or " how ſhould I expect, that even this increaſe of " honour or fortune would fully ſatisfy and content " my ambition, ſhould I now give way to it?"

So engaging an inſtance of unaffected moderation and ſelf-denial, deſerves well to be conſidered by the buſtlers in this world;——becauſe, if we are to truſt the face and courſe of things, we ſcarce ſee any virtue ſo hard to be put in practice, and which the generality of mankind ſeem ſo unwilling to learn, as this——of knowing when they have enough, and when it is time to give over their worldly purſuits, —Aye! but nothing is more eaſy, you will anſwer, than to fix this point, and ſet certain bounds to it.—

"For my own part, you will ſay, I declare, I want and would wiſh no more, but a ſufficient competency of thoſe things which are requiſite to the real uſes and occaſions of life, ſuitable to the way I have been taught to expect from uſe and education."—But recollect how ſeldom it ever happens, when theſe points are ſecured, but that new occaſions and new neceſſities preſent themſelves, and, every day as you grow richer, freſh wants are diſcovered which riſe up before you as you aſcend the hill: ſo that every ſtep you take,——every acceſſion to your fortune, ſets your deſires one degree farther from reſt and ſatisfaction;——that ſomething you have not yet graſped, and poſſibly never ſhall,—that devil of a phantom, unpoſſeſſed and unpoſſeſſable, is perpetually haunting you, and ſtepping in betwixt you and your contentment.——Unhappy creature! to think of enjoying that bleſſing without moderation!—or imagine that ſo ſacred a temple can be raiſed upon the foundation of wealth or power!—If the groundwork is not laid within your own mind, they will as ſoon add a cubit to your ſtature, as to your happineſs.——To be convinced it is ſo,——pray look up to thoſe who have got as high as their warmeſt wiſhes could carry them in this aſcent:——Do you obſerve they live the better, the longer, the merrier, ——or that they ſleep the ſounder in their beds, for having twice as much as they wanted, or well know how to diſpoſe of?—Of all rules for calculating happineſs, this is the moſt deceitful, and which few but weak minds, and thoſe unpractiſed in the world too, ever think of applying as the meaſure in ſuch an eſti-

mation.——Great and inexpreſſible may be the happineſs, which a moderate fortune and moderate deſires, with a conſciouſneſs of virtue, will ſecure. Many are the ſilent pleaſures of the honeſt peaſant, who riſes cheerful to his labour.—Why ſhould they not?——Look into his houſe, the ſeat of each man's happineſs; has he not the ſame domeſtic endearments,—the ſame joy and comfort in his children, and as flattering hopes of their doing well, to enliven his hours and glad his heart, as you could conceive in the higheſt ſtation;——And I make no doubt in general, but if the true ſtate of his joy and ſufferings could be fairly balanced with thoſe of his betters, whether any thing would appear at the foot of the account, but what would recommend the moral of this diſcourſe.—This, I own, is not to be attained to, by the cynical ſtale trick of haranguing againſt the goods of fortune.—They were never intended to be talked out of the world;——but, as virtue and true wiſdom lie in the middle of extremes,——on one hand, not to neglect and deſpiſe riches, ſo as to forget ourſelves, and on the other, not to purſue and love them ſo as to forget GOD:——to have them ſometimes in our heads—but always ſomething more important in our hearts.

SERMON XIV.

Self-Examination.

ISAIAH I. 3.

The ox knoweth his owner, and the aſs his maſter's crib;—Iſrael doth not know,—my people doth not conſider.

'Tis a ſevere but an affectionate reproach of the prophet's, laid againſt the Iſraelites, which may ſafely be applied to every heedleſs and unthankful people, who are neither won by GOD's mercies, nor terrified by his puniſhments.——There is a giddy, thoughtleſs, intemperate ſpirit gone forth into the world, which poſſeſſes the generality of mankind;—and the reaſon the world is undone, is, becauſe the world does not conſider:——conſiders neither awful regard to GOD——nor the true relation themſelves bear to him. Could they conſider this, and learn to weigh the cauſes, and compare the conſequences of things, and to exerciſe the reaſon which GOD has put into us for the government and direction of our lives,—there would be ſome hopes of a reformation: but as the world goes, there is no leiſure for ſuch inquiries; and ſo full are our minds of other mat-

ters, that we have no time to aſk, or a heart to anſwer the queſtions we ought to put to ourſelves.

Whatever our condition is, 'tis good to be acquainted with it in time, to be able to ſupply what is wanting,—and examine the ſtate of our accounts, before we come to give them up to an impartial judge.

The moſt inconſiderate ſee the reaſonableneſs of this,—there being few, I believe, either ſo thoughtleſs, or even ſo bad, but that they ſometimes enter upon this duty, and have ſome ſhort intervals of ſelf-examination, which they are forced upon, if from no other motive, yet at leaſt to free themſelves from the load and oppreſſion of ſpirits they muſt neceſſarily be ſubject to without it.——But as the ſcripture frequently intimates—and obſervation confirms it daily, that there are many miſtakes attending the diſcharge of this duty,—I cannot make the remainder of this diſcourſe more uſeful, than by a ſhort inquiry into them. I ſhall therefore, firſt, beg leave to remind you of ſome of the many unhappy ways, by which we often ſet about this irkſome taſk of examining our works, without being either the better or the wiſer for the employment.

And firſt, then, let us begin with that which is the foundation of almoſt all the other falſe meaſures we take in this matter,—that is, the ſetting about the examination of our works, before we are prepared with honeſt diſpoſitions to amend them.——This is beginning the work at the wrong end. Theſe previous diſpoſitions in the heart, are the wheels that ſhould make this work go eaſily and ſucceſsfuly forwards;——and to take them off, and proceed with-

out them, 'tis no miracle, if, like Pharaoh's chariots, they that drive them,——drive them heavily along.

Beſides, if a man is not ſincerely inclined to reform his faults,——'tis not likely he ſhould be inclined to ſee them,—nor will all the Weekly Preparations that ever were wrote, bring him nearer the point;—ſo that, with how ſerious a face ſoever he begins to examine,——he no longer does the office of an inquirer,—but an apologiſt, whoſe buſineſs is not to ſearch for truth—but ſkilfully to hide it.—So long, therefore, as this pre-engagement laſts betwixt the man and his old habits,—there is little proſpect of proving his works to any good purpoſe—of whatever kind they are, with ſo ſtrong an intereſt and power on their ſide.—As in other trials, ſo in this, 'tis no wonder, if the evidence is puzzled and confounded, and the ſeveral facts and circumſtances ſo twiſted from their natural ſhapes, and the whole proof ſo altered and confirmed on the other ſide,—as to leave the laſt ſtate of that man even worſe than the firſt.

A ſecond unhappy, though general miſtake, in this great duty of proving our works,—is that which the apoſtle hints at; in the doing it, not by a direct examination of our own actions, but from a comparative view of them with the lives and actions of other men.

When a man is going to enter upon this work of ſelf-examination—there is nothing ſo common, as to ſee him look *round* him—inſtead of looking *within* him.—He looks round,—finds out ſome one who is

more malicious,—ſees another that is more covetous, a third that is more proud and imperious than himſelf—and ſo indirectly forms a judgment of himſelf, not from a review of his life, and a proving of his own works, as the apoſtle directs him, but rather from proving the works of others, and from their infirmities and defects drawing a deceitful concluſion in favour of himſelf.—In all competitions of this kind—one may venture to ſay there will be ever ſo much of ſelf-love in a man, as to draw a flattering likeneſs of one of the parties—and 'tis well if he has not ſo much malignity too, as to give but a coarſe picture of the other,——finiſhed with ſo many hard ſtrokes, as to make the one as unlike its original as the other.

Thus the phariſee, when he entered the temple, ——no ſooner ſaw the publican, but that moment he formed the idea to himſelf of all the vices and corruptions that could poſſibly enter into the man's character,—and with great dexterity ſtated all his own virtues and good qualities over-againſt them. His abſtinence and frequent faſtings,—exactneſs in the debts and ceremonies of the law; not balancing the account as he ought to have done, in this manner:—What! though this man is a publican and a ſinner, have not I my vices as well as he? 'Tis true, his particular office expoſes him to many temptations of committing extortion and injuſtice;—but then,—am not I a devourer of widow's houſes, and guilty of one of the moſt cruel inſtances of the ſame crime? He poſſibly is a profane perſon, and may ſet religion at nought; but do not I myſelf for a pretence make

long prayers, and bring the greateſt of all ſcandals upon religion, by making it a cloak to my ambitious and worldly views;—If he, laſtly, is debauched and intemperate,——am not I conſcious of as corrupt and wanton diſpoſitions; and that a fair and guarded outſide is my beſt pretence to the oppoſite character?

If a man will examine his works by a comparative view of them with others,—this, no doubt, would be the fairer way, and leaſt likely to miſlead him.—But as this is ſeldom the method this trialis gone through,——in fact it generally turns out to be as treacherous and deluſive to the man himſelf, as it is uncandid to the man who is dragged into the compariſon; and whoever judges of himſelf by this rule,—ſo long as there is no ſcarcity of vicious characters in the world,—'tis to be feared he will often take the occaſions of triumph and rejoicing,—where in truth he ought to be ſorry and aſhamed.

A third error in the manner of proving our works, is what we are guilty of, when we leave out of the calculation the only material parts of them;———I mean the motives and firſt principles from whence they proceeded. There is many a fair inſtance of generoſity, chaſtity, and ſelf-denial, which the world may give a man the credit of,—which, if he would give himſelf the leiſure to reflect upon and trace back to their firſt ſprings,——he would be conſcious proceeded from ſuch views and intentions, as, if known, would not be to his honour.—The truth of this may be made evident by a thouſand inſtances in life:—and yet there is nothing more uſual than for a man

when he is going upon this duty of ſelf-examination —inſtead of calling his own ways to remembrance, to cloſe the whole enquiry at once, with this ſhort challenge ;—" *That he defies the world to ſay ill of* " *him*" If the world has no expreſs evidence, this indeed may be an argument of his good luck ; but no ſatisfactory one, of the real goodneſs and innocence of his life.—A man may be a very bad man,—and yet, through caution——through deep-laid policy and deſign, may ſo guard all outward appearances as never to want this negative teſtimony on his ſide ; —*that the world knows no ill of him*,—how little ſoever he deſerves it.—Of all eſſays upon a man's ſelf, this may be ſaid to be the ſlighteſt ; this method of proving the goodneſs of our works——differing but little in kind from that unhappy one, which many unwary people take in proving the goodneſs of their coin,—who, if it happens to be ſuſpicious,—inſtead of bringing it either to the balance or the touchſtone, to try its worth,—they ignorantly go forth ; try, if they can paſs it upon the world :—if ſo, all is well, and they are ſaved all the expence and pains of inquiring after and detecting the cheat.

A fourth error in this duty of examination of men's works——is that of committing the taſk to others ; —an error into which thouſands of well-meaning creatures are enſnared in the Romiſh church, by her doctrines of auricular confeſſion, of works of ſupererogation, and the many lucrative practices raiſed upon that capital ſtock :—the trade of which is carried to ſuch a height, in Popiſh countries, that if you was at Rome or Naples now, and was diſpoſed,

in compliance with the apoſtle's exhortation in the text, to ſet about this duty, to prove your *own* works, —'tis great odds whether you would be ſuffered to do it yourſelf, without interruption; and you might be ſaid to have eſcaped well, if the firſt perſon you conſulted upon it, did not talk you out of your reſolution, and poſſibly your ſenſes too at the ſame time. ——Prove your works!——for Heaven's ſake, deſiſt from ſo raſh an undertaking.—What!—truſt your own ſkill and judgment in a matter of ſo much difficulty and importance,——when there are ſo many whoſe buſineſs it is,——who underſtand it ſo well, and who can do it for you with ſo much ſafety and advantage.

If your works muſt be proved, you would be adviſed by all means to ſend them to undergo this operation with ſome one who knows what he is about, ——either ſome expert and noted confeſſor of the church,——or to ſome convent, or religious ſociety, who are in poſſeſſion of a large ſtock of good works of all kinds, wrought up by ſaints and confeſſors, where you may ſuit yourſelf—and either get the defects of your own ſupplied——or be accommodated with new ones ready proved to your hands, ſealed, and certified to be ſo, by the Pope's commiſſary and the notaries of his eccleſiaſtic court. There needs little more to open this fatal error,—than barely to repreſent it. So I ſhall only add a ſhort remark,—that they who are perſuaded to be thus virtuous by proxy, and will prove the goodneſs of their works only by deputies,—will have no reaſon to complain againſt GOD'S juſtice,——if he ſuffers them to go to

heaven only in the ſame manner,—that is,—by deputies too.

The laſt miſtake which I ſhall have time to mention, is that which the methodiſts have revived, for 'tis no new error—but one which has miſled thouſands before theſe days, wherever enthuſiaſm had got footing,—and that is——the attempting to prove their works by that very argument which is the greateſt proof of their weakneſs and ſuperſtition :—I mean that extraordinary impulſe and intercourſe with the Spirit of God which they pretend to, and whoſe operations (if you truſt them) are ſo ſenſibly felt in their hearts and ſouls, as to render at once all other proofs of their works needleſs to themſelves.—This, I own, is one of the moſt ſummary ways of proceeding in this duty of ſelf-examination, and as it proves a man's works, in the groſs, it ſaves him a world of ſober thought and enquiry after many vexatious particulars.

Indeed, if the premiſes were true,—the inference is direct. For when a man dreams of theſe inward workings—and wakes with the impreſſion of them ſtrong upon his brain ; 'tis not ſtrange he ſhould think himſelf a choſen veſſel,—ſanctified within, and ſealed up unto the perfect day of redemption, and ſo long as ſuch a one is led captive by this error,—there is nothing in nature to induce him to this duty of examining his own works in the ſenſe of the prophet :——for, however bad they are——ſo long as his credulity and enthuſiaſm equal them, 'tis impoſſible they ſhould diſturb his conſcience, or frighten him into a reformation.——Theſe are ſome of the

unhappy miſtakes in the many methods this work is ſet about,—which in a great meaſure rob us of the fruits we expected—and ſometimes ſo entirely blaſt them, that we are neither the better or wiſer for all the pains we have taken.

There are many other falſe ſteps which lead us the ſame way;—but the delineation of theſe, however, may ſerve at preſent, not only as ſo many land-marks to guard us from this dangerous coaſt which I have deſcribed, but to direct us likewiſe into that ſafe one where we can only expect the reward the goſpel promiſes. For if, according to the firſt recited cauſes, a man fails in examining his works, from a diſinclination to reform them,—from partiality of compariſons,——from flattery to his own motives, and a vain dependence upon the opinion of the world,—the concluſion is unavoidable,—that he muſt ſearch for the qualities the moſt oppoſite to theſe for his conductors.—And if he hopes to diſcharge this work ſo as to have advantage from it—that he muſt ſet out upon the principles of an honeſt head, willing to reform itſelf, and attached principally to that object, without regard to the ſpiritual condition of others, or the miſguided opinions which the world may have of himſelf.

That, for this end—he muſt call his own ways to remembrance, and ſearch out his ſpirit;—ſearch his actions with the ſame critical exactneſs and the ſame piercing curioſity, we are wont to ſit in judgment upon others;——varniſhing nothing—and diguiſing nothing. If he proceeds thus, and in every relation of life takes a full view of himſelf without prejudice

——traces his actions to their principles without mercy, and looks into the dark corners and receſſes of his heart without fear—and if, upon ſuch an inquiry—he acts conſiſtent with his view in it, by reforming his errors, ſeparating the droſs, and purifying the whole maſs with repentance;—this will bid fair for examining a man's works in the apoſtle's ſenſe:—and whoever diſcharges the duty thus—with a view to ſcripture, which is the rule in this caſe——and to reaſon, which is the applier of this rule in all caſes——need not fear but he will have what the prophet calls *rejoicing in himſelf*, and that he will lay the foundation of his peace and comfort where it ought to lie—that is, within himſelf—in the teſtimony of a good conſcience, and the joyful expectation, that, having done his utmoſt to examine his *own* works here, GOD will accept them hereafter through the merits of Chriſt; which GOD grant. Amen

SERMON XV.

Job's Expoſtulation with his Wife.

JOB II. 10.

What!—Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and ſhall we not receive evil alſo?

THESE are the words of Job, uttered in the depth of his misfortuſles, by way of reproof to his wife, for the counſel we find ſhe had given him in the foregoing verſe; namely, not to retain his integrity any longer,—but to *curſe God and die*. Though it is not very evident, what was particularly meant and implied in the words——"Curſe GOD and die,"—— yet it is certain from Job's reply to them, that they directed him to ſome ſtep, which was raſh and unwarrantable, and probably, as it is generally explained, meant that he ſhould openly call GOD's juſtice to an account: and by a blaſphemous accuſation of it, provoke GOD to deſtroy his being; as if ſhe had ſaid,—After ſo many ſad things which have befallen thee, notwithſtanding thy integrity, what gaineſt thou by ſerving GOD, ſeeing he bears thus hard upon thee, as though thou waſt his enemy?——Ought ſo faithful a ſervant as thou haſt been, to receive ſo much

unkind treatment at his hands;—and tamely to ſubmit to it?—patiently to ſuſtain the evils he has brought upon thy houſe, and neither murmur with thy lips, nor charge him with injuſtice?—Bear it not thus;——and as thy piety could not at firſt protect thee from ſuch misfortunes,—nor thy behaviour under them could ſince move GOD to take pity on thee;—change thy conduct towards him;—boldly expoſtulate with him;——upbraid him openly with unkindneſs;—call his juſtice and providence to an account for oppreſſing thee in ſo undeſerved a manner, and get that benefit by provoking him, which thou haſt not been able to obtain by ſerving him—to die at once by his hands, and be freed, at leaſt, from the greater miſery of a lingering and more tormenting death.

On the other hand, ſome interpreters tell us——that the word *curſe*, in the original, is equivocal, and does more literally ſignify here, to bleſs, than to blaſpheme; and conſequently that the whole is rather to be conſidered as a ſarcaſtical ſcoff at Job's piety.—— As if it had been ſaid;—Go to,—bleſs GOD,—and die;—ſince thou art ſo ready to praiſe him in troubles as thou haſt done, go on in thy own way, and ſee how GOD will reward thee, by a miſerable death which thou canſt not avoid.

Without diſputing the merit of theſe two interpretations, it may not ſeem an improbable conjecture, that the words imply ſomething ſtill different from what is expreſſed in either of them:——and, inſtead of ſuppoſing them as an incitement to blaſpheme GOD——which was madneſs—or that they were in-

tended as an inſult, which was unnatural;—that her advice, to curſe GOD and die, was meant here, that he ſhould reſolve upon a voluntary death himſelf, which was an act not only in his own power, but what carried ſome appearance of a remedy with it, and promiſed, at leaſt at firſt ſight, ſome reſpite from pain, as it would put an end both to his life and his misfortunes together.

One may ſuppoſe that with all the concern and affection which was natural, ſhe beheld her lord afflicted both with poverty and ſickneſs;—by one ſudden blow brought down from his palace to the dunghill.——In one mournful day ſhe ſaw, that not only the fortunes of his houſe were blaſted, but likewiſe the hopes of his poſterity cut off for ever by the untimely loſs of his children.—She knew he was a virtuous and an upright man, and deſerved a better fate;—her heart bled the more for him,—ſhe ſaw the proſpect before him was dreadful,——that there appeared no poſſible means, which could retrieve the ſad ſituation of his affairs;—that death, the laſt—— the ſureſt friend to the unfortunate, could only ſet him free;—and that it was better to reſolve upon that at once, than vainly endeavour to wade through ſuch a ſea of troubles, which in the end would overwhelm him. We may ſuppoſe her ſpirits ſinking under thoſe apprehenſions, when ſhe began to look upon his conſtancy as a fruitleſs virtue, and from that perſuaſion to have ſaid unto him,—Curſe GOD, —depend no longer upon him, nor wait the iſſues of his providence, which has already forſaken thee:— as there is no help from that quarter,—reſolve to

extricate thyſelf;—and ſince thou haſt met with no juſtice in this world,—leave it,—die,——and force thy paſſage into a better country, where misfortunes cannot follow thee.

Whether this paraphraſe upon the words is juſt, or the former interpretations be admitted—the reply in the text is equally proper;—What!—Shall we receive good at the hands of GOD, and ſhall we not receive evil alſo! Are not both alike the diſpenſations of an all-wiſe and good Being, who knows and determines what *is beſt?* and wherefore ſhould I make myſelf the judge, to receive the one, and yet be ſo partial as to reject the other, when, by fair by putting both into the ſcale, I may be convinced how much the good outweighs the evil in all caſes?—in my own conſider how ſtrong this argument is againſt me.

In the beginning of my days, how did GOD crown me with honour! in how remarkable a manner did his providence ſet a hedge about me, and about all that I had on every ſide!—how he proſpered the works of my hands, ſo that our ſubſtance and happineſs increaſed every day!

And now, when, for reaſons beſt known to his infinite wiſdom, he has thought fit to try me with afflictions,—ſhall I rebel againſt him in ſinning with my lips, and charging him fooliſhly?—GOD forbid?——O rather may I look up towards that hand which has bruiſed me,—for he maketh ſore and he bindeth up——he woundeth, and his hands make whole. From his bounty only has iſſued all I had: from his wiſdom—all I have loſt; for he giveth, and he hath taken away: bleſſed be his name!

There are few inſtances of particular virtue more engaging than thoſe of this heroic caſt; and if we may take the teſtimony of a heathen philoſopher upon it, there is not an object in this world which GOD can be ſuppoſed to look down upon with greater pleaſure, than that of a good man involved in misfortunes, ſurrounded on all ſides with difficulties—yet cheerfully bearing up his head, and ſtruggling againſt them with firmneſs and conſtancy of mind. ——Certainly, to our conceptions, ſuch objects muſt be truly engaging:—and the reaſon of ſo exalted an encomium from this hand, is eaſily to be gueſſed: no doubt the wiſeſt of the heathen philoſophers had found, from obſervation upon the life of man, that the many troubles and infirmities of his nature,—— the ſickneſſes, diſappointments, ſorrows for the loſs of children or property, with the numberleſs other calamities and croſs accidents to which the life of man is ſubject, were in themſelves ſo *great*—and ſo *little* ſolid comfort to be adminiſtered from the mere refinements of philoſophy in ſuch emergencies, that there was no virtue which required greater efforts, or which was found ſo difficult to be atchieved upon moral principles; upon moral principles—which had no foundation to ſuſtain this great weight, which the infirmities of our natures laid upon it. And for this reaſon 'tis obſervable that there is no ſubject, upon which the moral writers of antiquity have exhauſted ſo much of their eloquence, or where they have ſpent ſuch time and pains, as in this of endeavouring to reconcile men to theſe evils. Inſomuch, that from thence, in moſt modern languages, the patient en-

during of affliction has by degrees obtained the name of *Philoſophy*, and almoſt monopolized the word to itſelf, as if it was the chief end or compendium of all the wiſdom which philoſophy had to offer. And indeed, conſidering what lights they had, ſome of them wrote extremely well; yet, as what they ſaid proceeded more from the head than the heart, 'twas generally more calculated to ſilence a man in his troubles, than to convince and teach him how to bear them. And therefore, however ſubtle and ingenious their arguments might appear in the reading, 'tis to be feared they loſt much of their efficacy when tried in the application. If a man was thruſt back in the world by diſappointments, or—as was Job's caſe——had ſuffered a ſudden change in his fortune,—from an affluent condition was brought down by a train of cruel incidents and pinched with poverty——philoſophy would come in, and exhort him to ſtand his ground;—it would tell him that the ſame greatneſs and ſtrength of mind, which enabled him to behave well in the day of his proſperity, ſhould equally enable him to behave well in the days of his adverſity;—that it was the property of only weak and baſe ſpirits, who were inſolent in the one, to be dejected and overthrown by the other; whereas great and generous ſouls were at all times calm and equal.—As they enjoyed the advantages of life with indifference,——they were able to reſign them with the ſame temper,—and conſequently,——were out of the reach of fortune. All which, however fine, and likely to ſatisfy the fancy of a man at eaſe, could convey but little conſolation

to a heart already pierced with ſorrow;—nor is it to be conceived how an unfortunate creature ſhould any more receive relief from ſuch a lecture, however juſt, than a man, racked with an acute fit of the gout or ſtone, could be ſuppoſed to be ſet free from torture by hearing from his phyſician a nice diſſertation upon his caſe. The philoſophic conſolations in ſickneſs, or in afflictions for the death of friends and kindred, were juſt as efficacious;—and were rather in general to be conſidered as good ſayings, than good remedies.——So that, if a man was bereaved of a promiſing child, in whom all his hopes and expectations centered, or a wife was left deſtitute to mourn the loſs and protection of a kind and tender huſband, Seneca or Epictetus would tell the penſive parent and diſconſolate widow,—that tears and lamentation for the dead were fruitleſs and abſurd!—that to die, was the neceſſary and unavoidable debt of nature;——and as it could admit of no remedy——'twas impious and fooliſh to grieve and fret themſelves upon it. Upon ſuch ſage counſel, as well as many other leſſons of the ſame ſtamp, the ſame reflection might be applied, which is ſaid to have been made by one of the Roman emperors, to one who adminiſtered the ſame conſolations to him on a like occaſion,—to whom adviſing him to be comforted and make himſelf eaſy, ſince the event had been brought about by a fatality, and could not be helped,—he replied,——"That this was ſo far "from leſſening his trouble,——That it was the very "circumſtance which occaſioned it."——So that, upon the whole—when the true value of theſe, and

many more of their current arguments have l
weighed and brought to the teſt,—one is le
doubt, whether the greateſt part of their heroes,
moſt renowned for conſtancy, were not much n
indebted to good nerves and ſpirits, or the nat
happy frame of their tempers, for behaving v
than to any extraordinary helps, which they c
be ſuppoſed to receive from their inſtructors.
therefore I ſhould make no ſcruple to aſſert,
one ſuch inſtance of patience and reſignatio
this, which the ſcripture gives us in the perſo
Job, not of one moſt pompouſly declaiming u
the contempt of pain and poverty, but of a
ſunk in the loweſt condition of humanity;—to
hold him, when ſtripped of his eſtate,—his we
his friends, his children——cheerfully holding
his head, and entertaining his hard fortune v
firmneſs and ſerenity,—and this, not from a ſt
ſtupidity, but a juſt ſenſe of GOD'S providence,
a perſuaſion of his juſtice and goodneſs in all
dealings——Such an example, I ſay, as this, i
more univerſal uſe, ſpeaks truer to the heart, t
all the heroic precepts which the pedantry of ph
ſophy has to offer.

This leads me to the point I aim at in this
courſe; namely, that there are no principles
thoſe of religion, to be depended on in caſes of
diſtreſs; and that theſe are able to encounter
worſt emergencies; and to bear us up under
the changes and chances to which our life is
ject.

Conſider then what virtue the very firſt prin

eligion has, and how wonderfully it is conducive his end. That there is a GOD, a powerful, a and good Being, who firſt made the world, and inues to govern it;—by whoſe goodneſs all gs are deſigned,—and by whoſe providence all gs are conducted, to bring about the greateſt beſt ends. The ſorrowful and penſive wretch was giving way to his misfortunes, and mourn- r ſinking under them; the moment this doctrine es in to his aid, huſhes all his complaints,—and ſpeaks comfort to his ſoul;——"It is the ORD, let him do what ſeemeth him good;— ithout his direction I know that no evil can be- ll me,—without his permiſſion that no power ın hurt me——It is impoſſible a Being ſo wiſe ould miſtake my happineſs,———or that a eing ſo good ſhould contradict it. If he has enied me riches or other advantages———per- ıps he foreſees the gratifying my wiſhes would ndo me, and by my own abuſe of them be per- erted to my ruin. If he has denied me the queſt of children,—or in his providence has ıought fit to take them from me——how can I y——whether he has not dealt kindly with me, ıd only taken that away which he foreſaw would nbitter and ſhorten my days? It does ſo to ıouſands, where the diſobedience of a thankleſs ild has brought down the parent's grey hairs ith ſorrow to the grave. Has he viſited me ith ſickneſs, poverty, or other diſappointments? -Can I ſay, but theſe are bleſſings in diſguiſe; —ſo many different expreſſions of his care and

" concern to diſentangle my thoughts from this " world, and fix them upon another——another, a " better world beſides this !"——This thought opens a new ſcene of hope and conſolation to the unfortunate :—and as the perſuaſion of a Providence reconciles him to the evils he has ſuffered,—this proſpect of a future life gives him ſtrength to deſpiſe them, and eſteem the light afflictions of this life as they are—not worthy to be compared to what is reſerved for him hereafter.

Things are great or ſmall by compariſon—and he who looks no farther than this world, and balances the accounts of his joys and ſufferings from that conſideration, finds all his ſorrows enlarged, and at the cloſe of them will be apt to look back, and caſt the ſame ſad reflection upon the whole, which the patriarch did to Pharaoh,——" That " few and evil had been the days of his pilgrim- " age." But let him lift up his eyes towards heaven, and ſtedfaſtly behold the life of immortality of a future ſtate,——he then wipes away all tears from off his eyes for ever and ever;—like the exiled captive, big with the hopes that he is returning home——he feels not the weight of his chains, or counts the days of his captivity; but looks forward with rapture towards the country where his heart is fled before.

Theſe are the aids which religion offers us towards the regulating of our ſpirit under the evils of life;—but, like great cordials, they are ſeldom uſed but on great occurrences.—In the leſſer evils of life we ſeem to ſtand unguarded, and our peace and contentment

overthrown, and our happineſs broke in upon
little impatience of ſpirit, under the croſs and
ward accidents we meet with.—Theſe ſtand un-
ided for, and we neglect them as we do the
ter indiſpoſitions of the body—which we think
worth treating ſeriouſly—and ſo leave them to
re. In good habits of the body, this may do;—
I would gladly believe, there are ſuch good ha-
of the temper, ſuch a complexional eaſe and
th of heart, as may often ſave the patient much
icine.—We are ſtill to conſider——that how-
ſuch good frames of mind are got—they are
th preſerving by all rules:—Patience and con-
ment,—which, like the treaſure hid in the field,
which a man ſold all he had to purchaſe—is of
price that it cannot be had at too great a pur-
e—ſince, without it, the beſt condition in life
ot make us happy,—and with it, it is im-
ible we ſhould be miſerable even in the worſt.
-Give me leave therefore to cloſe this diſcourſe
ı ſome reflections upon the ſubject of a content-
mind—and the duty in man of regulating his
it, in our way through life;—a ſubject in every
y's mouth—preached upon daily to our friends
kindred—but too oft in ſuch a ſtyle, as to con-
e the party lectured, only of this truth,——That
bear the misfortunes of others with excellent
quillity.

believe there are thouſands ſo extravagant in
r ideas of contentment, as to imagine that it
ſt conſiſt in having every thing in this world
out the way they wiſh—that they are to ſit

down in happineſs, and find themſelves ſo at eaſe in all points, as to deſire nothing better and nothing more. I own there are inſtances of ſome, who ſeem to paſs through the world as if all their paths had been ſtrewed with roſe-buds of delight;—— but a little experience will convince us 'tis a fatal expectation to go upon.——We are born to trouble; and we may depend upon it, whilſt we live in this world, we ſhall have it, though with intermiſſions—— that is, in whatever ſtate we are, we ſhall find a mixture of good and evil; and therefore, the true way to contentment, is to know how to receive theſe certain viciſſitudes of life,——the returns of good and evil, ſo as neither to be exalted by the one, or overthrown by the other, but to bear ourſelves towards every thing which happens, with ſuch eaſe and indifference of mind, as to hazard as little as may be. This is the true temperate climate fitted for us by nature, and in which every wiſe man would wiſh to live.—God knows, we are perpetually ſtraying out of it, and, by giving wings to our imaginations in the tranſports we dream of, from ſuch or ſuch a ſituation in life, we are carried away alternately into all the extremes of hot and cold; for which, as we are neither fitted by nature, or prepared by expectation, we feel them with all their violence, and with all their danger too.

God, for wiſe reaſons, has made our affairs in this world almoſt as fickle and capricious as ourſelves.——Pain and pleaſure, like light and darkneſs, ſucceed each other; and he that knows how to accommodate himſelf to the periodical returns, and

can wiſely extract the good from the evil—knows only how to live;—this is true contentment, at leaſt all that is to be had of it in this world: and for this every man muſt be indebted, not to his fortune, but to himſelf.——And indeed it would have been ſtrange, if a duty ſo becoming us as dependent creatures——and ſo neceſſary beſides to all our well-beings, had been placed out of the reach of any in ſome meaſure to put in practice—and for this reaſon, there is ſcarce any lot ſo low, but there is ſomething in it to ſatisfy the man whom it has befallen; Provdience having ſo ordered things, that in every man's cup, how bitter ſoever, there are ſome cordial drops——ſome good circumſtances, which, if wiſely extracted, are ſufficient for the purpoſe he wants them,—that is, to make him contented, and if not happy, at leaſt reſigned. May GOD bleſs all with his Spirit, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt! Amen.

SERMON XVI.

The Character of Shimei.

2 SAMUEL XIX. 21. 1ſt Part.

But Abiſhai ſaid, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this?—

——It has not a good aſpect—This is the ſecond time *Abiſhai* has propoſed *Shimei*'s deſtruction; once in the 16th chapter, on a ſudden tranſport of indignation, when *Shimei* curſed David,——"*Why ſhould this dead dog*, cried Abiſhai, *curſe my lord the king? "Let me go over, I pray thee, and cut off his head.*" ——This had ſomething at leaſt of gallantry in it; for in doing it he hazarded his own; and beſides, the offender was not otherwiſe to be come at: the ſecond time is in the text, when the offender was abſolutely in their power—when the blood was cool; and the ſuppliant was holding up his hands for mercy.

—Shall not Shimei, anſwered Abiſhai, be put to death for this? So unrelenting a purſuit looks leſs like juſtice than revenge, which is ſo cowardly a paſſion, that it renders Abiſhai's firſt inſtance almoſt inconſiſtent with the ſecond. I ſhall not endeavour to reconcile them; but confine the diſcourſe ſimply

to Shimei; and make ſuch reflections upon his character as may be of uſe to ſociety.

Upon the news of his ſon Abſalom's conſpiracy, David had fled from Jeruſalem, and from his own houſe, for ſafety: the repreſentation given of the manner of it, is truly affecting:—never was a ſcene of ſorrow ſo full of diſtreſs!

The king fled with all his houſehold to ſave himſelf from the ſword of the man he loved: he fled with all the marks of humble ſorrow——"*with his* "*head covered, and barefoot:*" and as he went by the aſcent of Mount Olivet, the ſacred hiſtorian ſays, he wept;——ſome gladſome ſcenes, perhaps, which there had paſſ'd—ſome hours of feſtivity he had ſhared with Abſalom in better days, preſſed tenderly upon nature—he wept at this ſad viciſſitude of things;——and all the people that were with him, ſmitten with his affliction, *covered each* man *his head* —*weeping as he went* up.

It was on this occaſion, when David had got to Bahurim, that Shemei the ſon of Gera, as we read in the 5th verſe, came out.——Was it with the choiceſt oils he could gether from Mount Olivet, to pour into his wounds?——Times and troubles had not done enough; and thou cameſt out, Shemei, to add thy portion——

"*And* as *he came, he curſed David, and threw ſtones,* "*and caſt duſt at him: and thus ſaid Shimei, when he* "*curſed: Go to, thou man of Belial,—thou haſt ſought* "*blood, and behold thou* art *caught in thy own miſchief;* "for now hath the *Lord returned* upon thee all the "blood *of Saul and his houſe.*"

There is no ſmall degree of malicious craft in fixing upon a ſeaſon to give a mark of enmity and ill-will: a word,—a look, which at one time would make no impreſſion—at another time wounds the heart: and, like a ſhaft flying with the wind, pierces deep, which, with its own natural force, would ſcarce have reached the object aimed at.

This ſeemed to have been Shimei's hopes: but exceſs of malice makes men too quick-ſighted even for their own purpoſe. Could Shimei poſſibly have waited for the ebb of David's paſſions, and till the firſt great conflict within him had been over —then the reproach of being guilty of Saul's blood muſt have hurt him:—his heart was poſſeſſed with other feelings——it bled for the deadly ſting which Abſalom had given him—he felt not the indignity of a ſtranger——"*Behold, my ſon Abſalom, who came* "*out of my bowels, ſeeketh my life—how much more* "*may Shimei do it?——let him alone: it may be the* "*Lord may look upon my affliction, and requite me good* "*for this evil.*"

An injury unanſwered, in courſe grows weary of itſelf, and dies away in a voluntary remorſe.

In bad diſpoſitions capable of no reſtraint but fear —it has a different effect; the ſilent digeſtion of one wrong provokes a ſecond.—He purſues him with the ſame invective; *and as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along the hill's ſide over-againſt him; and curſed as he went, and caſt duſt at him.*

The inſolence of baſe minds in ſucceſs, is boundleſs; and would ſcarce admit of a compariſon, did not they themſelves furniſh us with one in the de-

grees of their abjection when evil returns upon them. ——The ſame poor heart which excites ungenerous tempers to triumph over a fallen adverſary, in ſome inſtances ſeems to exalt them above the point of courage, ſinks them in others even below cowardice. —Not unlike ſome little particles of matter ſtruck off from the ſurface of the dirt by ſunſhine—dance and ſport there whilſt it laſts,—but the moment 'tis withdrawn—they fall down—for duſt they are—and unto duſt they will return;——whilſt firmer and larger bodies preſerve the ſtations which nature has aſſigned them, ſubjected to laws which no change of weather can alter.

This laſt did not ſeem to be Shimei's caſe; in all David's proſperity, there is no mention made of him;—he thruſt himſelf forward into the circle, and poſſibly was numbered amongſt friends and well-wiſhers.

When the ſcene changes, and David's troubles force him to leave his houſe in deſpair—Shimei is the firſt man we hear of, who comes out againſt him.

The wheel turns round once more: Abſalom is caſt down, and David returns in peace—Shimei ſuits his behaviour to the occaſion, and is the firſt man alſo who haſtes to greet him——and had the wheel turned round a hundred times, Shimei, I dare ſay, in every period of its rotation, would have been uppermoſt.

O Shimei! would to heaven, when thou waſt ſlain, that all thy family had been ſlain with thee, and not one of thy reſemblance left, but ye have

multiplied exceedingly by and replenished the earth; and, if I prophesy rightly—ye will in the end *subdue* it.

There is not a character in the world, which has so bad an influence upon the affairs of it, as this of Shimei. Whilst power meets with honest checks, and the evils of life with honest refuge, the world will never be undone: but thou, Shimei, hast sapped it at both extremes: for thou corruptest prosperity—and 'tis thou who hast broken the heart of poverty; and so long as worthless spirits can be ambitious ones, 'tis a character we shall never want. O! it infests the court—the camp—the cabinet;—it infests the church:—go where you will—in every quarter, in every profession, you see a Shimei following the wheels of the fortunate, through thick mire and clay.——

—Haste, Shimei!—haste; or thou wilt be undone for ever.——Shimei girdeth up his loins and speedeth after him.——Behold the hand which governs every thing,—takes the wheels from off his chariot, so that he who driveth, driveth on heavily. ——Shimei doubles his speed——but 'tis the contrary way; he flies like the wind over a sandy desert, and the place thereof shall know it no more.—Stay, Shimei! 'tis your patron—your friend—your benefactor; 'tis the man who has raised you from the dunghill.—— 'Tis all one to Shimei: Shimei is the barometer of every man's fortune; marks the rise and fall of it, with all the variations from scorching hot to freezing cold upon his countenance, that the simile will admit of.——Is a cloud upon thy af-

fairs?—ſee——it hangs over Shimei's brow—Haſt *thou been* ſpoken for to the king or the captain of the hoſt without ſucceſs?——look not into the court-calendar——the vacancy is fill'd up in Shimei's face.—Art thou in debt?——though not to Shimei—no matter——the worſt officer of the law ſhall not be more inſolent.

What then, Shimei! is the guilt of poverty ſo black——is it of ſo general a concern, that thou and all thy family muſt riſe up as one man to reproach it?—when it loſt every thing——did it looſe the right to pity too?—or did He who maketh poor as well as maketh rich, ſtrip it of its natural powers to mollify the hearts and ſupple the temper of your race?——Truſt me, ye have much to anſwer for; it is this treatment which it has ever met with from ſpirits like yours, which has gradually taught the world to look upon it as the greateſt of evils, and ſhun it as the worſt diſgrace.—And what is it I beſeech you—what is it that man will not do, to keep clear of ſo ſore an imputation and puniſhment?——Is it not, to fly from this, that *he riſes early,——late takes reſt, and eats the bread of carefulneſs?*——that he plots—contrives—ſwears—lies—ſhuffles—puts on all ſhapes—tries all garments—wears them with this or that ſide outward—juſt as it favours his eſcape:

They who have conſidered our nature, affirm, that ſhame and diſgrace are two of the moſt inſupportable evils of human life; the courage and ſpirits of many have maſtered other misfortunes, and borne themſelves up againſt them; but the wiſeſt and beſt of ſouls have not been a match for theſe; and we have

many a tragical inſtance on record, what greater evils have been run into, merely to avoid this one.

Without this tax of infamy, poverty, with all the burdens it lays upon our fleſh——ſo long as it is virtuous, could never break the ſpirits of a man: all its hunger, and pain, and nakedneſs, are nothing to it; they have ſome counterpoiſe of good; and beſides they are directed by Providence, and muſt be ſubmitted to: but thoſe are afflictions, not from the hand of GOD or nature——"*for they do come* "*forth of the* DUST, and moſt properly may be ſaid "*to ſpring out of the* GROUND; and this is the rea- "ſon they lay ſuch ſtreſs upon our patience,—and "in the end, create ſuch a diſtruſt of the world, as "makes us look up——and pray, *Let me fall into* "*thy hands, O God! but let me not fall into the hands* "*of men.*"

Agreeable to this, was the advice of Eliphaz to Job in the day of his diſtreſs——"*Acquaint thyſelf*, "ſaid he, NOW *with God*:"——indeed his poverty ſeemed to have left him no other friend: the ſwords of the Sabeans had frightened them away—all but a few; and, of what kind they were, the very proverb, of *Job's comforters*—ſays enough.

It is an inſtance which gives one great concern for human nature, "That a man, *who always wept* for "him who was in *trouble*;—*who never ſaw any periſh* "*for want of clothing*;—*who never ſuffered the ſtranger* "*to lodge in the ſtreet, but opened his door to the tra-* "*veller*:" *that a man* of ſo good a character,—*that he never cauſed the eyes of the widow to fail*,— "*or had eaten his morſel by himſelf alone, and the fa-*

therleſs had not eaten thereof;——that ſuch a man the moment he fell into poverty, ſhould have occaſion to cry out for quarter,—*Have mercy upon me, O my friends! for the hand of God has touched me,*—— Gentleneſs and humanity (one would think) would melt the hardeſt heart, and charm the fierceſt ſpirit; bind up the moſt violent hand, and ſtill the moſt abuſive tongue;——but the experiment failed in a ſtronger inſtance, of Him, whoſe meat and drink it was to do us good; and, in purſuit of which, whoſe whole life was a continued ſcene of kindneſs and of inſults, for which we muſt go back to the ſame explanation with which we ſet out,—and that is,—the ſcandal of poverty.——

"*This fellow we know not whence he is*"—was the popular cry of one part; and with thoſe who ſeemed to know better, the quere did not leſſen the diſgrace: ——Is not this the carpenter, the ſon of Mary?—Of Mary!—great GOD of Iſrael! What!—of the meaneſt of thy people! *for he had not regarded the low eſtate* of his hand-maiden)——and of the pooreſt, too! (for ſhe had not a lamb to offer, but was purified, as Moſes directed in ſuch a caſe, by the oblation of a turtle dove).

That the SAVIOUR of their nation could be poor, and not have where to lay his head,——was a crime never to be forgiven; and though the purity of his doctrine, and the works which he had done in its ſupport, were ſtronger arguments on its ſide, than his humiliation could be againſt it,—yet the offence ſtill remained:—they looked for the redemption of

Iſrael; but they would have it only in thoſe dreams of power which filled their imagination.——

Ye who weigh the worth of all things only in the goldſmith's balance!——was this religion for you?—a religion whoſe appearance was not great and ſplendid,—but looked thin and meagre, and whoſe principles and promiſes ſhowed more like the curſes of the law, than its bleſſings! for they called for ſufferings, and promiſed little but perſecutions.

In truth, it is not eaſy for tribulation or diſtreſs, for nakedneſs or famine, to make many converts out of pride: or reconcile a worldly heart to the ſcorn and reproaches, which were ſure to be the portion of every one who believed a myſtery ſo diſcredited by the world, and ſo unpalatable to all its paſſions and pleaſures.

But, to bring this ſermon to its proper concluſion——

If Aſtrea, or Juſtice, never finally took her leave of the world, till the day that poverty firſt became ridiculous, it is matter of conſolation, that the God of Juſtice is ever over us;—that whatever outrages the lowneſs of our condition may be expoſed to, from a mean and undiſcerning world,——that we walk in the preſence of the greateſt and moſt generous of Beings, who is infinitely removed from cruelty and ſtraitneſs of mind, and all thoſe little and illiberal paſſions, with which we hourly inſult each other.

The worſt part of mankind are not always to be conquered;—but if they are—'tis by the imitation of theſe qualities, which muſt do it:——'Tis true——

as I've ſhown——they may fail; but ſtill all is not loſt,——for if we conquer not the world——in the very attempts to do it, we ſhould at leaſt conquer ourſelves, and lay the foundation of our peace (where it ought to be) within our own hearts.

SERMON XVII.

The Caſe of Hezekiah and the Meſſengers *.

2 KINGS XX. 15.

And he ſaid, What have they ſeen in thine houſe? and Hezekiah anſwered, All the things that are in my houſe have they ſeen: there is nothing amongſt all my treaſures that I have not ſhown them.

——AND where was the harm, you'll ſay, in all this?

"An eaſtern prince, the ſon of Baladan, had "ſent meſſengers with preſents as far as from Baby- "lon, to congratulate Hezekiah upon the recovery "from his ſickneſs; and Hezekiah, who was a good "prince, acted conſiſtently with himſelf: *he receiv- "ed and entertained the men, and hearkened unto them;* "and before he ſent them away, he courteouſly "ſhowed them all that was worth a ſtranger's curi- "oſity in his houſe and in his kingdom——and in "this, ſeemed only to have diſcharged himſelf of "what urbanity or the *etiquette* of courts might re-

* Preached before his Excellency the Earl of HERTFORD, at Paris 1, 63.

"quire." Notwithſtanding this, in the verſe which immediately follows the text, we found he had done amiſs; and, as a puniſhment for it, that all his riches, which his forefathers had laid up in ſtore unto that day, were threatened to be carried away in triumph to Babylon,——the very place from whence the meſſengers had come.

A hard return! and what his behaviour does not ſeem to have deſerved. To ſet this matter in a clear light, it will be neceſſary to enlarge upon the whole ſtory:——the reflections which will ariſe out of it, as we go along, may help us——at leaſt, I hope they will be of uſe on their own account.

After the miraculous defeat of the Aſſyrians, we read in the beginning of this chapter, that Hezekiah was ſick even unto death; and that GOD ſends the prophet Iſaiah, with the unwelcome meſſage, *That he ſhould ſet his houſe in order, for that he ſhould die and not live.*

There are many inſtances of men, who have received ſuch news with the greateſt eaſe of mind, and even entertained the thoughts of it with ſmiles upon their countenances,—and this, either from ſtrength of ſpirits and the natural cheerfulneſs of their temper,——or that they knew the world, and cared not for it,——or expected a better——yet thouſands of good men, with all the helps of philoſophy, and againſt all the aſſurances of a well-ſpent life, that the change muſt be to their account,——upon the approach of death have ſtill lean'd towards this world, and wanted ſpirits and reſolution to bear the ſhock of a ſeparation from it for ever.

This, in ſome meaſure, ſeemed to have been Hezekiah's caſe; for though he had walked before GOD in truth, and with a perfect heart, and had done that which was good in his ſight,—yet we find that the haſty ſummons afflicted him greatly;—that upon the delivery of the meſſage he wept ſore;——that he turned his face towards the wall,——perhaps for the greater ſecrecy of his devotion, and that, by withdrawing himſelf thus from all external objects, he might offer up his prayers unto his GOD, with greater and more fervent attention.——And he prayed, and ſaid, O LORD! I beſeech thee remember—O Hezekiah! How couldſt thou fear that GOD had forgotten thee; or, how couldſt thou doubt of his remembrance of thy integrity, when he called thee to receive its recompenſe.

But here it appears of what materials man is made: he purſues happineſs—and yet is ſo content with miſery, that he would wander for ever in this dark vale of it,——and ſay, "*It is good, Lord! to be "here, and to build tabernacles of reſt;*" and ſo long as we are clothed with fleſh, and nature has ſo great a ſhare within us, it is no wonder if that part claims its right, and pleads for the ſweetneſs of life, notwithſtanding all its care and diſappointments.

This natural weakneſs, no doubt, had its weight in Hezekiah's earneſt prayer for life; and yet from the ſucceſs it met with, and the immediate change of GOD's purpoſe thereupon, it is hard to imagine, but that it muſt have been accompanied with ſome meritorious and more generous motive; and if we ſuppoſe, as ſome have done, that he turned his face

towards the wall, becauſe that part of his chamber looked towards the temple, the care of whoſe preſervation lay next his heart, we may conſiſtently enough give this ſenſe to his prayer.

" O GOD! remember how I have walked before " thee in truth;——how much I have done to re- " ſcue thy religion from error and falſehood:—thou " knoweſt that the eyes of the world are fixed upon " me, as one that hath forſaken their idolatry, and " reſtored thy worſhip;——that I ſtand in the midſt " of a crooked and corrupt generation, which looks " through all my actions, and watches all events " which happen to me: if now they ſhall ſee me " ſnatched away in the midſt of my days and ſervice, " How will thy great name ſuffer in my extinction! " Will not the heathen ſay, Thus it is to ſerve the " GOD of Iſrael!——How faithfully did Hezekiah " walk before him?—what enemies did he bring " upon himſelf, in too warmly promoting his wor- " ſhip? And now, when the hour of ſickneſs and " diſtreſs came upon him, and he moſt wanted the " aid of his GOD——behold how he was forſaken!"

It is not unreaſonable to aſcribe ſome ſuch pious and more diſintereſted motive to Hezekiah's deſire of life, from the iſſue and ſucceſs of his prayer:—— " *For it came to paſs, before Iſaiah had gone out into* " *the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to* " *him, ſaying Turn again, and tell Hezekiah, I have* " *heard his prayer, I have ſeen his tears; and behold I* " *will heal him.*

It was upon this occaſion, as we read in the 12th verſe of this chapter, that Berodach-baladan, ſon of

Baladan king of Babylon, ſent letters and a preſent unto Hezekiah. He had heard the fame of his ſickneſs and recovery; for as the Chaldeans were great ſearchers into the ſecrets of nature, eſpecially into the motions of the celeſtial bodies, in all probability they had taken notice, at that diſtance, of the ſtrange appearance of the ſhadow's returning ten degrees backwards upon their dials, and had inquired and learned upon what account, and in whoſe favour, ſuch a ſign was given; ſo that this aſtronomical miracle, beſides the political motive, which it would ſuggeſt of courting ſuch a favourite of heaven, had been ſufficient by itſelf to have led a curious people as far as Jeruſalem, that they might ſee the man for whoſe ſake the ſun had forſook his courſe.

And here we ſee how hard it is to ſtand the ſhock of proſperity,——and how much truer a proof we give of our ſtrength, in that extreme of life, than in the other.

In all the trials of adverſity, we find that Hezekiah behaved well,—nothing unmanned him. When beſieged by the Aſſyrian hoſt, which ſhut him up in Jeruſalem, and threatened his deſtruction,——he ſtood unſhaken, and depended upon GOD's ſuccour. ——When caſt down upon his bed of ſickneſs, and threatened with death, he meekly turned his face towards the wall,——wept and pray'd, and depended upon GOD's mercy.—But no ſooner does proſperity return upon him, and the meſſengers from a far country come to pay the flattering homage due to his greatneſs, and the extraordinary felicity of his life, but he turns giddy, and ſinks under the weight

of his good fortune; and, with a tranſport unbecoming a wiſe man upon it, 'tis ſaid he hearkened unto the men, and ſhowed them all the houſe of his precious things, the ſilver and the gold, the ſpices and the precious ointments, and all the houſe of his armour, and all that was found in his treaſures; that there was nothing in his houſe, nor in his dominions, that Hezekiah ſhow'd them not: for though it is not expreſsly ſaid here (though it is in the parallel paſſage in Chronicles,)——nor is he charged by the prophet that he did this out of vainty and a weak tranſport of oſtentation;——yet as we are ſure GOD could not be offended but where there was a real crime, we might reaſonably conclude, that this was his, and that He who ſearches into the heart of man, beheld that his was corrupted with the bleſſings he had given him, and that it was juſt to make what was the occaſion of his pride become the inſtrument of his puniſhment, by decreeing, that all the riches he had laid up in ſtore until that day, ſhould be carried away in triumph to Babylon, the very place from whence the meſſengers had come who had been eye-witneſſes of his folly.

" O Hezekiah!—how couldſt thou provoke GOD " to bring this judgment upon thee? How could " thy ſpirit, all meek and gentle as it was, have " ever fallen into this ſnare? Were thy treaſures " rich as the earth—What! was thy heart ſo vain " as to be lifted up therewith? Was not all that " was valuable in the world——nay, was not hea- " ven itſelf almoſt at thy command whilſt thou waſt " humble? and, How was it, that thou couldſt bar-

" ter away all this, for what was lighter than a bub-
" ble, and defecrate an action ſo full of courteſy
" and kindneſs as thine appeared to be, by ſuffer-
" ing it to take its riſe from ſo polluted a fountain?"

There is ſcarce any thing which the heart more unwillingly bears, than an analyſis of this kind.

We are a ſtrange compound; and ſomething foreign from what charity would ſuſpect, ſo eternally twills itſelf into what we do, that not only in momentous concerns, where intereſt lifts under it all the powers of diſguiſe,—but even in the moſt indifferent of our actions——not worth a fallacy——by force of habit, we continue it: ſo that whatever a man is about,—obſerve him,—he ſtands arm'd inſide and out with two motives; an oſtenſible one for the world,——and another which he reſerves for his own private uſe.—This, you may ſay, the world has no concern with: it might have been ſo; but by obtruding the wrong motive upon the world, and ſtealing from it a character, inſtead of winning one; ——we give it a right, and a temptation along with it, to inquire into the affair.

The motives of the one for doing it, are often little better than the others for deſerving it. Let us ſee if ſome ſocial virtue may not be extracted from the errors of both the one and the other.

VANITY bids all her ſons to be generous and brave, —and her daughters to be chaſte and courteous.— But why do we want her inſtructions?—Aſk the comedian, who is taught a part he feels not——

Is it that the principles of religion want ſtrength, or that the real paſſion for what is good and worthy

will not carry us high enough?—GOD! thou knoweſt they carry us too high—we want, not *to be*—but *to ſeem*.——

Look out of your door,—take notice of that man: ſee, what diſquieting, intriguing, and ſhifting, he is content to go through, merely to be thought a man of plain-dealing:—three grains of honeſty would ſave him all his trouble—alas! he has them not—Behold a ſecond, under a ſhow of piety hiding the impurities of a debauched life:—he is juſt entering the houſe of GOD:——would he was more pure—or leſs pious:——but then he could not gain his point.

Obſerve a third going on almoſt in the ſame track:—with what an inflexible ſanctity of deportment he ſuſtains himſelf as he advances!—every line in his face writes abſtinence;—every ſtride looks like a check upon his deſires;—See, I beſeech you, how he is cloak'd up with ſermons, prayers, and ſacraments; and ſo bemuffled with the externals of religion, that he has not a hand to ſpare for a worldly purpoſe.—He has armour at leaſt—Why does he put it on? Is there no ſerving GOD without all this? Muſt the garb of religion be extended ſo wide, to the danger of its rending?—Yes truly, or it will not hide the ſecret—and, What is that?

—That the ſaint has no religion at all.

But here comes GENEROSITY; giving—not to a decayed artiſt—but to the arts and ſciences themſelves. See—he *builds not a chamber in the wall apart for the prophet;* but whole ſchools and colleges for thoſe who come after. LORD! how they will magnify his name!—'tis in capitals already; the firſt—

the higheſt, in the gilded rent-roll of every hoſpital and aſylum.—

——One honeſt tear ſhed in private over the unfortunate, is worth it all.

What a problematic ſet of creatures does ſimulation make us! Who would divine, that all that anxiety and concern, ſo viſible in the airs of one half of that great aſſembly, ſhould ariſe from nothing elſe, but that the other half of it may think them to be men of conſequence, penetration, parts, and conduct? —What a noiſe amongſt the claimants about it! Behold *Humility*, out of mere pride—and *Honeſty*, almoſt out of knavery:—*Chaſtity*, never once in harm's way,—and *Courage*, like a Spaniſh ſoldier upon an Italian ſtage—a bladder full of wind.——

—Hark! that—the ſound of that trumpet,—— let not my ſoldier run,——'tis ſome good Chriſtian giving alms. O PITY! thou gentleſt of human paſſions! ſoft and tender are thy notes, and ill accord they with ſo loud an inſtrument.

Thus ſomething jars, and will for ever jar in theſe caſes: impoſture is all diſſonance, let what maſter ſoever of it undertake the part;——let him harmonize and modulate it as he may, one tone will contradict another; and whilſt we have ears to hear, we ſhall diſtinguiſh it——'Tis truth only which is conſiſtent and ever in harmony with itſelf: it ſits upon our lips, like the natural notes of ſome melodies, ready to drop out, whether we will or no;—it racks no invention to let ourſelves alone,—and needs fear no critic, to have the ſame excellency in the heart, which appears in the action.

It is a pleaſing alluſion the ſcripture makes uſe of, in calling us ſometimes a houſe, and ſometimes a temple, according to the more or leſs exalted qualities of the ſpiritual gueſt which is lodged within us. Whether this is the preciſe ground of the diſtinction, I will not affirm; but this much may be ſaid, that, if we are to be temples, 'tis truth and ſingleneſs of heart which muſt make the dedication; 'tis this which muſt firſt diſtinguiſh them from the unhallowed pile, where dirty tricks and impoſitions are practiſed by the hoſt upon the traveller, who tarries but for a moment, and returns not again.

We all take notice, how cloſe and reſerved people are; but we do not take notice, at the ſame time, that every one may have ſomething to conceal, as well as ourſelves; and that we are only marking the diſtances, and taking the meaſures of ſelf-defence from each other, in the very inſtances we complain of. This is ſo true, that there is ſcarce any character ſo rare, as a man of real, open, and generous integrity,——who carries his heart in his hand,——who ſays the thing he thinks, and does the thing he pretends. Though no one can diſlike the character,—yet, Diſcretion generally ſhakes her head,——and the world ſoon lets him into the reaſon.

"*O that I had in the wilderneſs a lodging of way-*
"*faring men! that I might leave ſuch a people, and go*
"*from them.*" Where is the man of a nice ſenſe of truth, and ſtrong feelings, from whom the duplicity of the world has not at one time or other wrung the ſame wiſh? and where lies the wilderneſs, to which

ſome one has not fled, from the ſame melancholy impulſe?

Thus much for thoſe who give occaſion to be though ill of;—let us ſay a word or two unto thoſe who take it.

But, to avoid all common-place cant as much as I can on this head,—I will forbear to ſay, becauſe I do not think it, that 'tis a breach of Chriſtian charity to think or ſpeak evil of our neighbour, &c.

—We cannot avoid it; our opinions muſt follow the evidence; and we are perpetually in ſuch engagements and ſituations, that 'tis our duty to ſpeak what our opinions are——But GOD forbid that this ever ſhould be done, but from its beſt motive—the ſenſe of what is due to virtue, governed by diſcretion, and the utmoſt fellow-feeling: were we to go on otherwiſe, beginning with the great broad cloak of hypocriſy, and ſo down through all its little trimmings and facings, tearing away, without mercy, all that look'd ſeemly,——we ſhould leave but a tatter'd world of it.

But I confine what I have to ſay, to a character leſs equivocal, and which takes up too much room in the world: it is that of thoſe, who, from a general diſtruſt of all that looks diſintereſted, finding nothing to blame in an action, and perhaps much to admire in it.—immediately fall foul upon its motives; *Does Job ſerve God for nought?* What a vile inſinuation!—Beſides, the queſtion was not, whether Job was a rich man, or a poor man? but, whether he was a man of integrity or no? and the appearances were ſtrong on his ſide: indeed it might have been other-

wife; it was poſſible Job might be inſincere, and the devil took the advantage of the die for it.

It is a bad picture, and done by a terrible maſter; and yet we are always copying it. Does a man, from real conviction of heart, forſake his vices!——the poſition is not to be allowed—no; his vices have forſaken him.

Does a pure virgin fear GOD, and ſay her prayers?——ſhe is in her climacteric.

Does humanity clothe and educate the unkown orphan!—Poverty! thou haſt no genealogies:—See! is he not the father of the child? Thus do we rob heroes of the beſt part of their glory—their virtue. Take away the motive of the act, you take away all that is worth having in it;——wreſt it to ungenerous ends, you load the virtuous man who did it with infamy——Undo it all—I beſeech you: give him back his honour——reſtore the jewel you have taken from him——replace him in the eye of the world——

——it is too late.

It is painful to utter the reproaches which ſhould come in here.—I will truſt them with yourſelves: in coming from that quarter, they will more naturally produce ſuch fruits as will not ſet your teeth on edge——for they will be the fruits of love and good-will, to the praiſe of GOD, and the happineſs of the world, which I wiſh.

SERMON XVIII.

The Levite and his Concubine

JUDGES XIX. 1, 2, 3.

And it came to paſs in thoſe days, when there was no king in Iſrael, that there was a certain Levite ſojourning on the ſide of Mount Ephraim, who took unto him a concubine.

——A CONCUBINE!— but the text accounts for it, *for in thoſe days there was no king in Iſrael:* and the Levite, you will ſay, like every other man in it, did what was right in his own eyes,—and ſo, you may add, did his concubine to,—*for ſhe played the whore againſt him and went away.*——

—Then Shame and grief go with her; and where-ever ſhe ſeeks a ſhelter, may the hand of juſtice ſhut the door againſt her!——

Not ſo; for ſhe went unto her father's houſe in Bethlehem-Judah, and was with him four whole months.—Bleſſed interval for meditation upon the fickleneſs and vanity of this world and its pleaſures! I ſee the holy man upon his knees,——with hands compreſſed to his boſom, and, with uplifted eyes, thanking Heaven, that the object which had ſo long ſhared his affections, was fled.——

The text gives a different picture of his ſituation; *for he aroſe and went after her to ſpeak friendly to her, and to bring her back again, having his ſervant with him, and a couple of aſſes; and ſhe brought him unto her father's houſe, and when the father of the damſel ſaw him, he rejoiced to meet him*——

——A moſt ſentimental group! you'll ſay: and ſo it is my good commentator, the world talks of every thing; give but the outlines of a ſtory,—— let *Spleen* or *Prudery* ſnatch the pencil, and they will finiſh it with ſo many hard ſtrokes, and with ſo dirty a colouring, that *Candour* and *Courteſy* will ſit in torture as they look at it.—Gentle and virtuous ſpirits! ye who know not what it is to be rigid interpreters, but of your own failings.—to you I addreſs myſelf, the unhired advocates for the conduct of the miſguided,—whence is it, that the world is not more jealous of your office? How often muſt ye repeat it, "That ſuch a one's doing ſo or ſo" ——is not ſufficient evidence by itſelf to overthrow the accuſed?—That our actions ſtand ſurrounded with a thouſand circumſtances which do not preſent themſelves at firſt ſight; that the firſt ſprings and motives which impell'd the unfortunate, lie deeper ſtill;—and, that of the millions which every hour are arraign'd, thouſands of them may have erred merely from the *head*, and been actually outwitted into evil; and, even when from the *heart* ——that the difficulties and temptations under which they acted,——the force of the paſſions,——the ſuitableneſs of the object, and the many ſtruggles of

Virtue before ſhe fell,—may be ſo many appeals from juſtice to the judgment ſeat of Pity.

Here then let us ſtop a moment, and give the ſtory of the Levite and his concubine a ſecond hearing. Like all others, much of it depends upon the telling; and as the ſcripture has left us no kind of comment upon it, 'tis a ſtory on which the heart cannot be at a loſs for what to ſay, or the imagination for what to ſuppoſe:——the danger is, humanity may ſay too much.

And it came to paſs in thoſe days, when there was no king in Iſrael, that a certain Levite ſojourning on the ſide of mount Ephraim, took unto himſelf a concubine.

O Abraham, thou father of the faithful! if this was wrong,—Why didſt thou ſet ſo enſnaring an example before the eyes of thy deſcendants? and, Why did the GOD of Abraham, the GOD of Iſaac and Jacob, bleſs ſo often the ſeed of ſuch intercourſes, and promiſe to multiply and make princes come out of them?

GOD can diſpenſe with his own laws: and accordingly we find the holieſt of the patriarchs, and others in Scripture, whoſe hearts cleaved moſt unto GOD, accommodating themſelves as well as they could to the diſpenſation: that Abraham had Hagar; that Jacob, beſides his two wives, Rachel and Leah, took alſo unto him Zilpah and Bilhah, from whom many of the tribes deſcended; that David had ſeven wives and ten concubines,—Rehoboam, ſixty;——and that in whatever caſes it became reproachable, it ſeemed not ſo much the thing itſelf,

as the abuſe of it, which made it ſo: this was remarkable in that of Solomon, whoſe exceſs became an inſult upon the privileges of mankind; for by the ſame plan of luxury, which made it neceſſary to have forty thouſand ſtalls of horſes,——he had unfortunately miſcalculated his other wants, and ſo had ſeven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines.

Wiſe—deluded man! was it not that thou madeſt ſome amends for thy bad practice, by thy good preaching, what had become of thee!—Three hundred—but let us turn aſide, I beſeech you, from ſo bad a ſtumbling-block.

The Levite had but one. The Hebrew word imports a woman a concubine, or a wife a concubine, to diſtinguiſh her from the more infamous ſpecies, who came under the roofs of the licentious without principle. Our annotators tell us, that in Jewiſh *economics*, theſe differ'd little from the wife, except in ſome outward ceremonies and ſtipulations, but agreed with her, in all the true eſſences of marriage, and gave themſelves up to the huſband (for ſo he is call'd), with faith plighted, with ſentiments, and with affection.

Such a one the Levite wanted to ſhare his ſolitude, and fill up that uncomfortable blank in the heart in ſuch a ſituation; for notwithſtanding all we meet with in books, in many of which, no doubt, there are a good many handſome things ſaid upon the ſweets of retirement, &c. . . . yet ſtill "*it is not "good for man to be alone:*" nor can all which the cold hearted pedant ſtuns our ears with upon the

ſubject, ever give one anſwer of ſatisfaction to the mind: in the midſt of the loudeſt vauntings of philoſophy, Nature will have her yearnings for ſociety and friendſhip;—a good heart wants ſome object to be kind to——and the beſt parts of our blood, and the pureſt of our ſpirits, ſuffer moſt under the deſtitution.

Let the torpid monk ſee heaven comfortleſs and alone—GOD ſpeed him! For my own part, I fear, I ſhould never ſo find the way. Let me be wiſe and religious——but let me be MAN. Wherever thy Providence places me, or whatever be the road I take to get thee—give me ſome companion in my journey, be it only to remark to, How our ſhadows lengthen as the ſun goes down;—to whom I may ſay, How freſh is the face of nature! How ſweet the flowers of the field! How delicious are theſe fruits!

Alas! with bitter herbs, like his paſſover, did the Levite eat them: for as they thus walked the path of life together,——ſhe wantonly turned aſide unto another, and fled from him.

It is the mild and quiet half of the world, who are generally outraged and borne down by the other half of it: but in this they have the advantage, whatever be the ſenſe of their wrongs, that pride ſtands not ſo watchful a centinel over their forgiveneſs, as it does in the breaſts of the fierce and froward. We ſhould all of us, I believe, be more forgiving than we are, would the world but give us leave; but it is apt to interpoſe its ill-office in remiſſions, eſpecially of this kind——The truth is, it

has its laws, to which the heart is not always a party; and acts so like an unfeeling engine in all cases, without distinction, that it requires all the firmness of the most settled humanity to bear up against it.

Many a bitter conflict would the Levite have to sustain with himself——his concubine——and the sentiments of his tribe, upon the wrong done him; ——much matter for pleading——and many an embarrassing account on all sides. In a period of four whole months, every passion would take its empire by turns; and in the ebbs and flows of the less unfriendly ones, PITY would find some moments to be heard——RELIGION herself would not be silent——CHARITY would have much to say;—and thus attun'd, every object he beheld on the borders of Mount Ephraim,—every grot and grove he pass'd by, would solicit the recollection of former kindness, and awaken an advocate in her behalf more powerful than them all.

"I grant—I grant it all"—he would cry,——'tis "foul! 'tis faithless!——But why is the door of "mercy to be shut for ever against it? and why is "it to be the only sad crime that the injured may "not remit, or reason or imagination pass over "without a scar?——Is it the blackest? In what ca"talogue of human offences is it so marked? or, Is "it, that of all others 'tis a blow most grievous to "be endured?—the heart cries out, It is so: but let "me ask my own, What passions are they which "give edge and force to this weapon which has "struck me? and, whether it is [redacted] my own pride,

" as much as my virtues, which at this moment ex-
" cite the greateſt part of that intolerable anguiſh in
" the wound which I am laying to her charge? But
" merciful Heaven! was it otherwiſe, why is an
" unhappy creature of thine to be perſecuted by me
" with ſo much cruel revenge and rancorous deſpite
" as my firſt tranſport called for?——Have faults
" no extenuations?——Makes it nothing, that when
" the treſpaſs was committed, ſhe forſook the part-
" ner of her guilt, and fled directly to her father's
" houſe? And is there no difference betwixt one
" propenſely going out of the road, and continuing
" there through depravity of will——and a hapleſs
" wanderer ſtraying by deluſion, and warily tread-
" ing back her ſteps?——Sweet is the look of ſor-
" row for an offence, in a heart determined never
" to commit it more!—Upon that altar only could
" I offer up my wrongs. Cruel is the puniſhment
" which an ingenious mind will take upon itſelf,
" from the remorſe of ſo hard a treſpaſs againſt me;
" —and if that will not balance the account,—juſt
" GOD! let me forgive the reſt. Mercy well be-
" comes the heart of all thy creatures,——but moſt
" of thy ſervant, a Levite, who offers up ſo many
" daily ſacrifices to thee, for the tranſgreſſions of thy
" people.———

—" But to little purpoſe," he would add, " have
" I ſerved at thy altar, where my buſineſs was to
" ſue for mercy, had I not learn'd to practiſe it."

Peace and happineſs reſt upon the head and heart of every man who can thus think.

So he aroſe and went after her, to ſpeak friendly to

her;—in the original—" to ſpeak to her heart;" to apply to their former endearments,—and to aſk How ſhe could be ſo unkind to him, and ſo very unkind to herſelf?——

—Even the upbraidings of the quiet and relenting are ſweet: not like the ſtrivings of the fierce and inexorable, who bite and devour all who have thwarted them in their way;——but they are calm and courteous, like the ſpirit which watches over their character. How could ſuch a temper woo the damſel, and not bring her back? or, How could the father of the damſel, in ſuch a ſcene, have a heart open to any impreſſions but thoſe mentioned in the text?—*That when he ſaw him, he rejoiced to meet him*;—— urged his ſtay from day to day, with that moſt irreſiſtable of all invitations,—" *Comfort thy heart, and* " *tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry.*"

If *mercy* and *truth* thus met together in ſettling this account, *Love* would ſurely be of the party: great——great is its power in cementing what has been broken, and wiping our wrongs even from the memory itſelf; and ſo it was—for the Levite aroſe up, and with him his concubine and his ſervant, and they departed.

It ſerves no purpoſe to purſue the ſtory further; the cataſtrophe is horrid, and would lead us beyond the particular purpoſe for which I have enlarged upon this much of it, and that is, to diſcredit raſh judgment, and illuſtrate, from the manner of conducting this drama, the courteſy which the *dramatis perſonæ* of every other piece may have a right to. Almoſt one half of our time is ſpent in telling and hearing

evil of one another——ſome unfortunate knight is always upon the ſtage—and every hour brings forth ſomething ſtrange and terrible to fill up our diſcourſe and our aſtoniſhment, "How people can be ſo fooliſh!"——and 'tis well if the compliment ends there; ſo that there is not a ſocial virtue for which there is ſo conſtant a demand;—or, conſequently, ſo well worth cultivating, as that which oppoſes this unfriendly current—Many and rapid are the ſprings which feed it, and various and ſudden, GOD knows, are the guſts which render it unſafe to us in this ſhort paſſage of our life. Let us make the diſcourſe as ſerviceable as we can, by tracing ſome of the moſt remarkable of them up to their ſource.

And, firſt, there is one miſerable inlet to this evil, and which, by the way, if ſpeculation is ſuppoſed to precede practice, may have been derived, for aught I know, from ſome of our buſieſt inquirers after nature,—and that is, when with more zeal than knowledge we account for phenomena, before we are ſure of their exiſtence.—*It is not the manner of the Romans to condemn any man to death* (much leſs to be martyr'd), ſaid Feſtus;——*and doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doth*, cried Nicodemus;——*and he that anſwereth*, or determineth, *a matter before he has heard it*,——*it is folly and a ſhame unto him.*——We are generally in ſuch a haſte to make our own decrees, that we paſs over the juſtice of theſe,—and then the ſcene is ſo changed by it, that 'tis our own folly only which is real, and that of the accuſed, which is imaginary: through too much precipitancy it will happen ſo;

and then the jeſt is ſpoil'd—or we have criticiſed our own ſhadow.

A ſecond way is when the proceſs goes on more orderly, and we begin with getting information,—but do it from thoſe ſuſpected evidences, againſt which our SAVIOUR warns us, when he bids us "*not to judge according to appearance:*"—in truth 'tis behind theſe that moſt of the things which blind human judgment lie concealed:—and, on the contrary, there are many things which appear to be——which are not——*Chriſt came eating and drinking—behold a wine bibber!*——he ſat with ſinners—he was their friend:—in many caſes of which kind, *Truth*, like a modeſt matron, ſcorns at—and diſdains to preſs herſelf forwards into the circle to be ſeen;—grounds ſufficient for *Suſpicion* to draw up the libel—for *Malice* to give the torture,——or raſh *Judgment* to ſtart up and paſs a final ſentence.

A third way is, when the facts which denote miſconduct are leſs diſputable, but are commented upon with an aſperity of cenſure, which a humane or a gracious temper would ſpare; an abhorrence againſt what is criminal, is ſo fair a plea for this, and looks ſo like virtue in the face, that in a ſermon againſt raſh judgment, it would be unſeaſonable to call it in queſtion,—and yet, I declare, in the fulleſt torrent of exclamations which the guilty can deſerve, that the ſimple apoſtrophe, "Who made thee to differ? "why was not I an example?" would touch my heart more, and give me a better earneſt of the commentators,——than the moſt corroſive period you could add. The puniſhment of the unhappy, I

fear, is enough without it:—and, were it not,—'tis piteous, the tongue of a Chriſtian, whoſe religion is all candour and courteſy, ſhould be made the executioner. We find in the diſcourſe between Abraham and the rich man, though the one was in heaven, and the other in hell, yet ſtill the patriarch treated him with mild language:——*Son!*——*Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime*, &c. &c.—And in the diſpute about the body of Moſes, between the Archangel and the devil (himſelf), St. Jude tells us, he durſt not bring a railing accuſation againſt him;—'twas unworthy his high character, and, indeed, might have been impolitic too; for if he had (as one of our divines notes upon the paſſage), the devil had been too hard for him at railing,—'twas his own weapon, and the baſeſt ſpirits, after his example are moſt expert at it.

This leads me to the obſervation of a fourth cruel inlet to this evil, and that is, the deſire of being thought men of wit and parts, and the vain expectation of coming honeſtly by the title, by ſhrewd and ſarcaſtic reflections upon whatever is done in the world. This is ſetting up trade upon the broken ſtock of other people's failings,—perhaps their misfortunes:—ſo, much good may it do them with what honour they can get,—the furtheſt extent of which, I think, is to be praiſed, as we do ſome ſauces, with tears in our eyes. It is a commerce moſt illiberal; and as it requires no vaſt capital, too many imbark in it: and ſo long as there are bad paſſions to be gratified,—and bad heads to judge, with ſuch it may paſs for wit; or, at leaſt, like ſome

vile relation whom all the family is aſhamed of, claim kindred with it, even in better companies. Whatever be the degree of its affinity, it has helped to give wit a bad name, as if the main eſſence of it was ſatire: certainly there is a difference between *Bitterneſs* and *Saltneſs*,——that is, between the malignity and the feſtivity of wit,——the one is a mere quickneſs of apprehenſion, void of humanity,—and is a talent of the devil; the other comes from the Father of ſpirits, ſo pure and abſtracted from perſons, that willingly it hurts no man: or, if it touches upon an indecorum, 'tis with that dexterity of true genius, which enables him rather to give a new colour to the abſurdity, and let it paſs.—He may ſmile at the ſhape of the obeliſk raiſed to another's fame;—but the malignant wit will level it at once with the ground, and build his own upon the ruins of it.—

What then, ye raſh cenſurers of the world! Have ye no manſions for your credit, but thoſe from whence ye have extruded the right owners? Are there no regions for you to ſhine in, that ye deſcend for it into the low caverns of abuſe and crimination? Have ye no ſeats——but thoſe of the ſcornful to ſit down in? If *Honour* has miſtook his road, or the *Virtues*, in their exceſſes, have approached too near the confines of VICE, are they therefore to be caſt down the precipice? Muſt BEAUTY for ever be trampled upon in the dirt, for one—one falſe ſtep? And ſhall no one virtue or good quality, out of the thouſand the fair penitent may have left,—ſhall not one of them be ſuffered to ſtand by her?—Juſt GOD of heaven and earth!

—But thou art merciful, loving, and righteous, and lookeſt down with pity upon theſe wrongs thy ſervants do unto each other: pardon us, we beſeech thee, for them, and all our tranſgreſſions; let it not be remember'd, that we were brethren of the ſame fleſh, the ſame feelings and infirmities. O my GOD! write it not down in thy book, that thou madeſt us merciful after thy own image;——that thou haſt given us a religion ſo courteous,—ſo good temper'd, —that every precept of it carries a balm along with it to heal the ſoreneſs of our natures, and ſweeten our ſpirits, that we might live with ſuch kind intercourſe in this world, as will fit us to exiſt together in a better.

SERMON XIX.

Felix's Behaviour towards Paul, examined.

ACTS XXIV. 16.

He hoped alſo, that money ſhould have been given him of Paul, that he might looſe him.

A NOBLE object to take up the conſideration of the Roman governor?

——"*He hoped that money ſhould have been given* "*him!*"——for what end? to enable him to judge betwixt right and wrong!—and, From whence was it to be wrung? from the poor ſcrip of a diſciple of the carpenter's ſon, who left nothing to his followers but poverty and ſufferings——

And was this Felix!—the great, the noble Felix! —Felix the happy!—the gallant Felix who kept Druſilla!——Could he do this?——Baſe paſſion! what canſt thou not make us do?

Let us conſider the whole tranſaction.

Paul, in the beginning of this chapter, had been accuſed before Felix, by Tertullus, of very grievous crimes,——of being a peſtilent fellow—a mover of ſeditions, and a profaner of the temple, &c.——To

which accuſations, the apoſtle, having liberty from Felix to reply, he makes his defence from the 10th to the 22d verſe, to this purport:—He ſhows him, firſt, that the whole charge was deſtitute of all proof; which he openly challenges them to produce againſt him, if they had it:—that, on the contrary, he was ſo far from being the man Tertullus had repreſented, that the very principles of the religion with which he then ſtood charged,——and which they called Hereſy, led him to be the moſt unexceptionable in his conduct, by the continual exerciſe which it demanded of him, of having a conſcience void of offence at all times, both towards GOD and man:—that conſiſtently with this, his adverſaries had neither found him in the temple diſputing with any man, neither raiſing up the people, neither in the ſynagogue, or in the city,—for this he appeals to themſelves:——that it was but twelve days ſince he came up to Jeruſalem for to worſhip:——that, during that time, when he purified in the temple, he did it as became him, without noiſe, without tumult; this he calls upon the Jews who came from Aſia, and were eye-witneſſes of his behaviour, to atteſt:——and, in a word he urges the whole defence before Felix in ſo ſtrong a manner, and with ſuch plain and natural arguments of his innocence, as to leave no colour for his adverſaries to reply.

There was, however, ſtill one adverſary in this court,—though ſilent, yet not ſatisfied.—

—Spare thy eloquence, Tertullus! roll up the charge: a more notable orator than thyſelf is riſen up,——'tis AVARICE, and that too in the moſt fatal

place for the priſoner it could have taken poſſeſſion of,——'tis in the heart of the man who judges him.

If Felix believed Paul innocent, and acted accordingly—(that is) releaſed him without reward,—this ſubtile advocate told him he would loſe one of the profits of his employment;—and if he acknowledged the faith of CHRIST, which Paul occaſionally explained in his defence,—it told him, he might loſe the employment itſelf:—ſo that notwithſtanding the character of the apoſtle appeared (as it was) moſt ſpotleſs, and the faith he profeſſed ſo very clear, that as he urged it, the heart gave its conſent,—yet, at the ſame time, the paſſions rebell'd, and ſo ſtrong an intereſt was formed thereby, againſt the firſt impreſſions in favour of the man and his cauſe, that both were diſmiſſed;——the one to a more convenient hearing which never came; the other to the hardſhips of a priſon for two whole years,—hoping, as the text informs us, that money ſhould have been given him: and even at the laſt, when he left the province, willing to do the Jews a pleaſure,—that is, to ſerve his intereſt in another ſhape, with all the conviction upon his mind that he had done nothing worthy of bonds; he, nevertheleſs, left the holy man bound, and conſigned over to the hopeleſs proſpect of ending his days in the ſame ſtate of confinement, in which he had ungenerouſly left him.

One would imagine, as covetouſneſs is a vice not naturally cruel in itſelf, that there muſt certainly have been a mixture of other motives in the governor's breaſt, to account for a proceeding ſo contrary to humanity and his own conviction: and could it be

of uſe to raiſe conjectures upon it, there ſeems but too probable grounds for ſuch a ſuppoſition. It ſeems that Druſilla, whoſe curioſity, upon a double account had led her to hear Paul—(for ſhe was a daughter of Abraham——as well as of Eve)——was a character which might have figured very well even in our own times; for, as Joſephus tells us, ſhe had left the Jew her huſband, and without any pretence in their law to juſtify a divorce, had given herſelf up without ceremony to Felix; for which cauſe, though ſhe is here called his wife, ſhe was, in reaſon and juſtice, the wife of another man,—and conſequently lived in an open ſtate of adultery. So that when Paul, in explaining the faith of CHRIST, took occaſion to argue upon the morality of the Goſpel,—and urged the eternal laws of juſtice, the unchangeable obligations to temperance, of which chaſtity was a branch,—— it was ſcarce poſſible to frame his diſcourſe ſo (had he wiſhed to temporize) but that either her intereſt or her love muſt have taken offence: and though we do not read, like Felix, that ſhe trembled at the account, 'tis yet natural to imagine ſhe was affected with other paſſions, of which the apoſtle might feel the effects—and 'twas well he ſuffered no more, if two ſuch violent enemies as Luſt and Avarice were combined againſt him.

But this by the way—for as the text ſeems only to acknowledge one of theſe motives, it is not our buſineſs to aſſign the other.

It is obſervable, that this ſame apoſtle, ſpeaking, in the epiſtle to Timothy, of the ill effects of this ſame ruling paſſion, affirms, that it is the root of all

evil; and I make no doubt but the remembrance of his own ſufferings had no ſmall ſhare in the ſeverity of the reflection.—Infinite are the examples, where the love of money is only a ſubordinate and miniſterial paſſion, exerciſed for the ſupport of ſome other vices: and 'tis generally found, when there is either ambition, prodigality, or luſt, to be fed by it, that it then rages with the leaſt mercy and diſcretion; in which caſes, ſtrictly ſpeaking, it is not the root of other evils, but other evils are the root of it.

This forces me to recal what I have ſaid upon covetouſneſs as a vice not naturally cruel: it is not apt to repreſent itſelf to our imaginations, at firſt ſight, under that idea; we conſider it only as a mean, worthleſs turn of mind, incapable of judging or doing what is right: but as it is a vice which does not always ſet up for itſelf,—to know truly what it is in this reſpect, we muſt know what maſters it ſerves; ——they are many, and of various caſts and humours,——and each one lends it ſomething of its own complexional tint and character.

This, I ſuppoſe, may be the cauſe that there is a greater and more whimſical myſtery in the love of money, than in the darkeſt and moſt nonſenſical problem that ever was pored on.

Even at the beſt, and when the paſſion ſeems to ſeek nothing more than its own amuſement,—there is little——very little, I fear, to be ſaid for its humanity.——It may be a ſport to the miſer;——but conſider—it muſt be death and deſtruction to others.—The moment this ſordid humour begins to govern —farewell all honeſt and natural affections! farewell

all he owes to parents, to children, to friends!—— How faſt the obligations vaniſh! See—he is now ſtripped of all feelings whatever:——the ſhrill cry of Juſtice——and the low lamentation of humble diſtreſs, are notes equally beyond his compaſs.—Eternal GOD! ſee!—he paſſes by one whom thou haſt juſt bruiſed, without one penſive reflection:—he enters the cabin of the widow, whoſe huſband and child thou haſt taken to thyſelf,—exacts his bond, without a ſigh!—Heaven! if I am to be tempted,—let it be by glory,——by ambition,——by ſome generous and manly vice:—If I muſt fall, let it be by ſome paſſion which thou haſt planted in my nature, which ſhall not harden my heart, but leave me room at laſt to retreat and come back to Thee!

It would be eaſy here to add the common arguments which reaſon offers againſt this vice; but they are ſo well underſtood, both in manner and form,—it is needleſs.

I might cite to you what Seneca ſays upon it——but the misfortune is, that at the ſame time he was writing againſt riches, he was enjoying a great eſtate, and uſing every means to make that eſtate ſtill greater.

With infinite pleaſure might a preacher enrich his diſcourſe in this place, by weaving into it all the ſmart things which ancient or modern wits have ſaid upon the love of money:—he might inform you,

"——That poverty wants ſome things——that "covetouſneſs wanteth all."

"That a miſer can only be ſaid to have riches, as

" a ſick man has a fever, which holds and tyran-
" nizes over the man—not he over it."

" That covetouſneſs is the ſhirt of the ſoul,—the
" laſt vice it parts with."

" The nature is content with few things,—or
" that nature is never ſatisfied at all," &c.

The reflection of our SAVIOUR, *That the life of man conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth*,—ſpeaks more to the heart,—and the ſingle hint of the *Camel*, and what a very narrow paſſage he has to go through,—has more coercion in it, than all the ſee-ſaws of philoſophy.

I ſhall endeavour therefore to draw ſuch other reflections from this piece of ſacred hiſtory, as are applicable to human life,——and more likely to be of uſe.

There is nothing generally in which our happineſs and honour are more nearly concerned, than in forming true notions both of men and things; for in proportion as we think rightly of them, we approve ourſelves to the world,—and as we govern ourſelves by ſuch judgments, ſo we ſecure our peace and well-being in paſſing through it: the falſe ſteps and miſcarriages in life, iſſuing from a defect in this capital point, are ſo many and fatal, that there can be nothing more inſtructive than an inquiry into the cauſes of this perverſion, which often appears ſo very groſs in us, that were you to take a view of the world——ſee what notions it entertains, and by what conſiderations it is governed,——you would ſay of the miſtakes of human judgment, what the prophet does of the folly of human actions——

" *That we were wiſe to do evil, but to judge rightly;*
" *had no underſtanding.*"

That in many dark and abſtracted queſtions of mere ſpeculation, we ſhould err——is not ſtrange: we live among myſteries and riddles, and almoſt every thing which comes in our way, in one light or other, may be ſaid to baffle our underſtandings? ——yet ſeldom ſo as to miſtake in extremities, and take one contrary for another.——'Tis very rare, for inſtance, that we take the virtue of a plant to be hot, when it is extremely cold,—or, that we try the experiment of opium, to keep us waking:——yet, this we are continually attempting in the conduct of life, as well as in the great ends and meaſures of it. That ſuch wrong determinations in us, do not ariſe from any defect of judgment inevitably miſleading us—would reflect diſhonour upon GOD; as if he had made and ſent man into the world on purpoſe to play the fool. His all bountiful hand made his judgment, like his heart, upright; and the inſtances of his ſagacity, in other things, abundantly confirm it. We are led therefore in courſe to a ſuppoſition, that, in all inconſiſtent inſtances, there is a ſecret bias, ſomehow or other, hung upon the mind, which turns it aſide from reaſon and truth.

What this is, if we do not care to ſearch for it in ourſelves, we ſhall find it regiſtered in this tranſaction of Felix: and we may depend, that in all wrong judgments whatever, in ſuch plain caſes as this, that the ſame explanation muſt be given of it, which is given in the text,—namely,—that it is ſome ſelfiſh conſideration—ſome ſecret dirty engagement with

ſome little appetite, which does us ſo much diſhonour.

The judgments of the more diſintereſted and impartial of us, receive no ſmall tincture from our affections: we generally conſult them in all doubtful points, and it happens well if the matter in queſtion is not almoſt ſettled before the arbitrator is called into the debate——But in the more flagrant inſtances, when the paſſions govern the whole man, 'tis melancholy to ſee the office to which Reaſon, the great prerogative of his nature, is reduced; ſerving the lower appetites in the diſhoneſt drudgery of finding out arguments to juſtify the preſent purſuit.

To judge rightly of our own worth, we ſhould retire a little from the world, to ſee all its pleaſures —and pains too—in their proper ſize and dimenſions—This, no doubt, was the reaſon St. Paul, when he intended to convert Felix, began his diſcourſe upon the day of judgment, on purpoſe to take the heart off from this world and its pleaſures, which diſhonour the underſtanding ſo as to turn the wiſeſt of men into fools and children.

If you enlarge your obſervations upon this plan, you will find where the evil lies which has ſupported thoſe deſperate opinions which have ſo long divided the Chriſtian world——and are likely to divide it for ever.

Conſider popery well; you will be convinced, that the trueſt definition which can be given of it, is,—That it is a pecuniary ſyſtem, well contrived to operate upon men's paſſions and weakneſs, whilſt

their pockets are o'picking. Run through all the points of difference between us,—and when you ſee, that, in every one of them, they ſerve the ſame end which Felix had in view, either of money or power —there is little room left to doubt whence the cloud ariſes which is ſpread over the underſtanding.

If this reaſoning is concluſive with regard to thoſe who merely differ from us in religion,—let us try if it will not hold good with regard to thoſe who have none at all,—or rather, who affect to treat all perſuaſions of it with ridicule alike. Thanks to good ſenſe, good manners, and a more enlarged knowledge, this humour is going down, and ſeems to be ſettling, at preſent, chiefly amongſt the inferior claſſes of people—where it is likely to reſt. As for the loweſt ranks, though they are apt enough to follow the modes of their betters, yet are they not likely to be ſtruck with this one, of making merry with that which is their conſolation; they are too ſerious a ſet of poor people ever heartily to enter into it.—

There is enough, however, of it in the world, to ſay that this all-ſacred ſyſtem, which holds the world in harmony and peace, is too often the firſt object that the giddy and inconſiderate make choice of to try the temper of their wits upon. Now, of the numbers who make this experiment, do you believe that one in a thouſand does it from conviction,—or from arguments which a courſe of ſtudy—much cool reaſoning—and ſober inquiry into antiquity, and the true merits of the queſtion, have furniſhed him with?——The years and way of life of the

moſt forward of theſe, lead us to a different explanation.

Religion, which lays ſo many reſtraints upon us, is a troubleſome companion to thoſe who will lay no reſtraints upon themſelves;——and for this reaſon there is nothing more common to be obſerved, than that the little arguments and cavils, which ſuch men have gathered up againſt it, in the early part of their lives,——how conſiderable ſoever they may have appeared, when viewed through their paſſions and prejudices, which give an unnatural turn to all objects,—yet, when the edge of appetite has been worn down, and the heat of the purſuit pretty well over,——and reaſon and judgment have got poſſeſſion of their empire——

——They ſeldom fail of bringing the loſt ſheep back to his fold.

May God bring us all there. Amen.

SERMON XX.

The Prodigal Son.

LUKE xv. 13.

And not many days after, the younger ſon gathered all he had together, and took his journey into a far country.—

I KNOW not whether the remark is to our honour or otherwiſe,—that leſſons of wiſdom have never ſuch power over us, as when they are wrought into the heart through the ground-work of a ſtory which engages the paſſions. Is it, that we are like iron, and muſt firſt be heated before we can be wrought upon? or, Is the heart ſo in love with deceit, that where a true report will not reach it, we muſt cheat it with a fable, in order to come at truth?

Whether this parable of the prodigal (for ſo it is uſually called)——is really ſuch, or built upon ſome ſtory known at that time in Jeruſalem, is not much to the purpoſe; it is given us to enlarge upon, and turn to the beſt moral account we can.

"A certain man," ſays our SAVIOUR, "had two "ſons, and the younger of them ſaid to his father, "Give me the portion of goods which falls to me:

" and he divided unto them his ſubſtance. And not
" many days after, the younger ſon gathered all to-
" gether, and took his journey into a far country,
" and there waſted his ſubſtance with riotous living."

The account is ſhort: the intereſting and pathetic paſſages with which ſuch a tranſaction would be neceſſarily connected, are left to be ſupplied by the heart:——the ſtory is ſilent—but nature is not:—much kind advice, and many a tender expoſtulation, would fall from the father's lips, no doubt, upon this occaſion.

He would diſſuade his ſon from the folly of ſo raſh an enterpriſe, by ſhowing him the dangers of the journey,—the inexperience of his age,—the hazards his life, his fortune, his virtue would run, without a guide, without a friend: he would tell him of the many ſnares and temptations which he had to avoid or encounter, at every ſtep,——the pleaſures which would ſolicit him in every luxurious court,——the little knowledge he could gain— except that of evil; he would ſpeak of the ſeductions of women,—their charms——their poiſons:—what hapleſs indulgences he might give way to, when far from reſtraint and the check of giving his father pain.

The diſſuaſive would but inflame his deſire.—

He gathers all together.——

——I ſee the picture of his departure——the camels and aſſes loaden with his ſubſtance, detached on one ſide of the piece, and already on their way —the prodigal ſon ſtanding on the fore ground, with a forced ſedateneſs, ſtruggling againſt the fluttering movement of joy, upon his deliverance from re-

ſtraint:——the elder brother holding his hand, as if unwilling to let it go:—the father,—ſad moment! with a firm look, covering a prophetic ſentiment, "that all would not go well with his child,"——approaching to embrace him and bid him adieu.—— Poor inconſiderate youth! From whoſe arms art thou flying? From what a ſhelter art thou going forth into the ſtorm? Art thou weary of a father's affection, of a father's care? or, Hopeſt thou to find a warmer intereſt, a truer counſellor, or a kinder friend in a land of ſtrangers, where youth is made a prey, and ſo many thouſands are confederated to deceive them, and live by their ſpoils?

We will ſeek no farther than this idea, for the extravagancies by which the prodigal ſon added one unhappy example to the number: his fortune waſted—the followers of it fled in courſe—the wants of nature remain:——the hand of GOD gone forth againſt him——"*for when he had ſpent all, a mighty "famine aroſe in that country.*"——Heaven! have pity upon the youth, for he is in hunger and diſtreſs—ſtrayed out of the reach of a parent, who counts every hour of his abſence with anguiſh—cut off from all his tender offices by his folly—and from relief and charity from others by the calamity of the times.—

Nothing ſo powerfully calls home the mind as diſtreſs: the tenſe fibre then relaxes,—the ſoul retires to itſelf,—fits penſive and ſuſceptible of right impreſſions: if we have a friend, 'tis then we think of him; if a benefactor, at that moment all his kindneſſes preſs upon our mind.—Gracious and bounti-

ful GOD! Is it not for this that they who in their proſperity forget thee, do yet remember and return to thee in the hour of their ſorrow? When our heart is in heavineſs, upon whom can we think but Thee, who knoweſt our neceſſities afar off,—putteſt all our tears in thy bottle,——ſeeſt every careful thought, ——heareſt every ſigh and melancholy groan we utter?——

Strange!——that we ſhould only begin to think of GOD with comfort, when with joy and comfort we can think of nothing elſe.

Man ſurely is a compound of riddles and contradictions: by the law of his nature he avoids pain, and yet *unleſs he ſuffers in the fleſh, he will not ceaſe from ſin*, though it is ſure to bring pain and miſery upon his head for ever.

Whilſt all went pleaſurably on with the prodigal, we hear not one word concerning his father——no pang of remorſe for the ſufferings in which he had left him, or reſolution of returning, to make up the account of his folly. His firſt hour of diſtreſs ſeemed to be his firſt hour of wiſdom:——*When he came to himſelf, he ſaid, How many hired ſervants of my father have bread enough and to ſpare, whilſt I periſh!*

Of all the terrors of nature, that of one day or other dying by hunger is the greateſt; and it is wiſely wove into our frame to awaken man to induſtry, and call forth his talents; and though we ſeem to go on careleſsly, ſporting with it as we do with other terrors,—yet, he that ſees this enemy fairly, and in his moſt frightful ſhape, will need no long remonſtrance to make him turn out of the way to avoid him.

It was the caſe of the prodigal—he aroſe to go to his father.——

——Alas! How ſhall he tell his ſtory? Ye who have trod this round, tell me in what words he ſhall give in to his father the ſad *Items* of his extavagance and folly?

—The feaſts and banquets which he gave to whole cities in the eaſt,—the coſts of Aſiatic rarities, and of Aſiatic cooks to dreſs them,——the expences of ſinging men and ſinging women,——the flute, the harp, the ſackbut, and of all kinds of muſic,—the dreſs of the Perſian courts, how magnificent! their ſlaves how numerous!—their chariots, their horſes, their palaces, the furniture, what immenſe ſums they had devoured!——what expectations from ſtrangers of condition; what exactions!

How ſhall the youth make his father comprehend that he was cheated at Damaſcus by one of the beſt men in the world;——that he had lent a part of his ſubſtance to a friend at Nineveh, who had fled off with it to the Ganges;—that a whore of Babylon had ſwallowed his beſt pearl, and anointed the whole city with his balm of Gilead;——that he had been ſold by a man of honour for twenty ſhekels of ſilver, to a worker in graven images;—that the images he had purchaſed had profited him nothing;——that they could not be tranſported acroſs the wilderneſs, and had been burnt with fire at Shuſan;——that the * apes and peacocks, which he had ſent for from Tharſis, lay dead upon his hands; and that the mummies had not been dead long enough, which had

* Vide 2 Chronicles ix. 21.

been brought him out of Egypt:——that all had gone wrong ſince the day he forſook his father's houſe?

—Leave the ſtory,——it will be told more conciſely.—*When he was yet afar off, his father ſaw him*—Compaſſion told it in three words—*he fell upon his neck and kiſſed him.*

Great is the power of eloquence; but never is it ſo great as when it pleads along with nature, and the culprit is a child ſtrayed from his duty, and returned to it again with tears: Caſuiſts may ſettle the point as they will: But what could a parent ſee more in the account, than the natural one, of an ingenuous heart—too open for the world—ſmitten with ſtrong ſenſations of pleaſures, and ſuffered to ſally forth unarmed into the midſt of enemies ſtronger than himſelf?

Generoſity ſorrows as much for the over-matched, as Pity herſelf does.

The idea of a ſon ſo ruined, would double the father's careſſes: every effuſion of his tenderneſs would add bitterneſs to his ſon's remorſe.——"Gracious "Heaven! what a father have I rendered miſerable!"

And he ſaid, I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and in thy ſight, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon.

But the father ſaid, Bring forth the beſt robe——

O ye affections! How fondly do ye play at croſs-purpoſes with each other?—'Tis the natural dialogue of true tranſport: joy is not methodical; and where an offender, beloved, overcharges itſelf in the offence, —words are too cold; and a conciliated heart replies by tokens of eſteem.

And he ſaid unto his ſervants, Bring forth the beſt robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and ſhoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and let us eat and drink and be merry.

When the affections ſo kindly break looſe, Joy is another name for Religion.

We look up as we taſte it—The cold Stoic without, when he hears the dancing and the muſic, may aſk ſullenly (with the elder brother) What it means? and refuſe to enter: but the humane and compaſſionate all fly impetuouſly to the banquet, given *for a ſon who was dead and is alive again—who was loſt and is found.* Gentle ſpirits, light up the pavilion, with a ſacred fire; and parental love and filial piety, lead in the maſk with riot and feſtivity!——Was it not for this that GOD gave man muſic to ſtrike upon the kindly paſſions; that nature taught the feet to dance to its movements, and as chief governeſs of the feaſt, poured forth wine into the goblet, to crown it with gladneſs?

The intention of this parable is ſo clear from the occaſion of it, that it will not be neceſſary to perplex it with any tedious explanation; it was deſigned by way of indirect remonſtrance to the Scribes and Phariſees, who animadverted upon our SAVIOUR's conduct, for entering ſo freely into conferences with ſinners, in order to reclaim them. To that end, he propoſes the parable of the ſhepherd, who left his ninety and nine ſheep that were ſafe in the fold, to go and ſeek for one ſheep that was gone aſtray,—— telling them in other places, that they who were whole wanted not a phyſician——but they that were

ſick: and here, to carry on the ſame leſſon, and to prove how acceptable ſuch a recovery was to GOD, he relates this account of the prodigal ſon, and his welcome reception.

I know not whether it would be a ſubject of much edification to convince you here, that our SAVIOUR, by the prodigal ſon, particularly pointed at thoſe who were *ſinners of the Gentiles*, and were recovered by Divine grace to repentance;—and that by the elder brother, he intended as manifeſtly, the more froward of the Jews, who envied their converſion, and thought it a kind of wrong to their primogeniture in being made fellow-heirs with them of the promiſes of GOD.

Theſe uſes have been ſo ably ſet forth, in ſo many good ſermons upon the prodigal ſon, that I ſhall turn aſide from them at preſent, and content myſelf with ſome reflections upon that fatal paſſion which led him——and ſo many thouſands after the example, *to gather all he had together, and take his journey into a far country.*

The love of variety, or curioſity of ſeeing new things, which is the ſame, or at leaſt a ſiſter paſſion to it,—ſeems wove into the frame of every ſon and daughter of Adam; we uſually ſpeak of it as one of Nature's levities, though planted within us for the ſolid purpoſes of carrying forwards the mind to freſh inquiry and knowledge: ſtrip us of it, the mind (I fear) would doze for ever over the preſent page; and we ſhould all of us reſt at eaſe with ſuch objects as preſented themſelves in the pariſh or province where we firſt drew breath.

It is to this ſpur, which is ever in our ſides, that we owe the impatience of this deſire for travelling: the paſſion is no way bad—but as others are—in its miſmanagement or exceſs;——order it rightly, the advantages are worth the purſuit; the chief of which are—to learn the languages, the laws and cuſtoms, and underſtand the government and intereſt of other nations——to acquire an urbanity and confidence of behaviour, and fit the mind more eaſily for converſation and diſcourſe—to take us out of the company of our aunts and grandmothers, and from the track of nurſery miſtakes; and by ſhowing us new objects, or old ones in new lights, to reform our judgments—by taſting perpetually the varieties of nature, to know what *is good*——by obſerving the addreſs and arts of men, to conceive what *is ſincere*—and, by ſeeing the difference of ſo many various humours and manners—to look into ourſelves, and form our own.

This is ſome part of the cargo we might return with; but the impulſe of ſeeing new ſights, augmented with that of getting clear from all leſſons both of wiſdom and reproof at home——carries our youth too early out, to turn this venture to much account; on the contrary, if the ſcene painted of the prodigal in his travels, looks more like a copy than an original,—will it not be well if ſuch an adventurer, with ſo unpromiſing a ſetting out,—without *carte*—without compaſs——be not caſt away for ever,——and may he not be ſaid to eſcape well——if he returns to his country, only as he firſt left it?

But you will ſend an able pilot with your ſon——a ſcholar.——

If wiſdom can ſpeak in no other language but Greek or Latin——you do well;——or if mathematics will make a man a gentleman——or natural philoſophy but teach him to make a bow,—he may be of ſome ſervice in introducing your ſon into good ſocieties, and ſupporting him in them when he has done:—but the upſhot will be generally this, that, in the moſt preſſing occaſions of addreſs——if he is a mere man of reading, the unhappy youth will have the tutor to carry——and not the tutor to carry him.——

But you will avoid this extreme; he ſhall be eſcorted by one who knows the world, not merely from books——but from his own experience:——a man who has been employed on ſuch ſervices, and thrice made the *tour of Europe, with ſucceſs.*

——That is, without breaking his own, or his pupil's neck;—for if he is ſuch as my eyes have ſeen! ſome broken *Swiſs valet de chambre,*—ſome general undertaker, who will perform the journey in ſo many months "IF GOD PERMIT,"—much knowledge will not accrue,—ſome profit at leaſt;—he will learn the amount to a halfpenny, of every ſtage from Calais to Rome;—he will be carried to the beſt inns,—inſtructed where there is the beſt wine, and ſup a livre cheaper than if the youth had been left to make the tour and the bargain himſelf.—Look at our governor! I beſeech you:—ſee, he is an inch taller as he relates the advantages.—

—And here endeth his pride,—his knowledge, and his uſe.

But when your ſon gets abroad, he will be taken

out of his hand, by his ſociety with men of rank and letters, with whom he will paſs the greateſt part of his time.

Let me obſerve, in the firſt place,—that company which is really good, is very rare,—and very ſhy: but you have ſurmounted this difficulty; and procured him the beſt letters of recommendation to the moſt eminent and reſpectable in every capital.

And I anſwer, that he will obtain all by them, which courteſy ſtrictly ſtands obliged to pay on ſuch occaſions, but no more.

There is nothing in which we are ſo much deceived, as in the advantages propoſed from our connexions and diſcourſe with the literati, &c. in foreign parts; eſpecially if the experiment is made before we are matured by years or ſtudy.

Converſation is a traffic; and if you enter into it, without ſome ſtock of knowledge to balance the account perpetually betwixt you,——the trade drops at once: and this is the reaſon,——however it may be boaſted to the contrary, why travellers have ſo little (eſpecially good) converſation with natives,—owing to their ſuſpicion—or perhaps conviction, that there is nothing to be extracted from the converſation of young itinerants, worth the trouble of their bad language—or the interruption of their viſits.

The pain on theſe occaſions is uſually reciprocal; the conſequence of which is, that the diſappointed youth ſeeks an eaſier ſociety: and as bad company is always ready and ever lying in wait,——the career is ſoon finiſhed; and the poor prodigal returns the ſame object of pity, with the prodigal in the Goſpel.

SERMON XXI.

National Mercies conſidered *.

DEUTERONOMY VI. 20, 21.

And when thy ſon aſketh thee in time to come, ſaying, What mean the teſtimonies, and the ſtatutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? then ſhalt thou ſay unto thy ſon, We were Pharaoh's bondſmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

THESE are the words which Moſes left as a ſtanding anſwer for the children of Iſrael to give their poſterity, who in time to come might become ignorant, or unmindful of the many and great mercies which GOD had vouchſafed to their forefathers; all which had terminated in that one, of their deliverance out of bondage.

Though they were directed to ſpeak in this manner, each man to his ſon, yet one cannot ſuppoſe that the direction ſhould be neceſſary for the next generation,—for the children of thoſe who had been eye witneſſes of GOD's providences: it does not ſeem likely that any of them ſhould arrive at that age of

* On the inauguration of his preſent Majeſty.

reaſoning which would put them upon aſking the ſuppoſed queſtion, and not be, long before-hand, inſtructed in the anſwer. Every parent would tell his child the hardſhips of his captivity, and the amazing particulars of his deliverance: the ſtory was ſo uncommon,—ſo full of wonder,—and withal, the recital of it would ever be a matter of ſuch tranſport, it could not poſſibly be kept a ſecret:——the piety and gratitude of one generation, would anticipate the curioſity of another; their ſons would learn the ſtory with their language.

This probably might be the caſe with the firſt or ſecond race of people; but, in proceſs of time, things might take a different turn; a long and undiſturbed poſſeſſion of their liberties, might blunt the ſenſe of thoſe providences of GOD which had procured them, and ſet the remembrance of all his mercies at too great a diſtance from their hearts. After they had for ſome years been eaſed of every real burden, an exceſs of freedom might make them reſtleſs under every imaginary one, and, amongſt others, that of their religion; from thence they might ſeek occaſion to inquire into the foundation and fitneſs of its ceremonies, its ſtatutes and its judgments.

They might aſk, what meant ſo many commands, in matters which to them appeared indifferent in their own natures? What policy in ordaining them? and, What obligation could there lie upon reaſonable creatures, to comply with a multitude of ſuch unaccountable injunctions, ſo unworthy the wiſdom of GOD?

Hereafter poſſibly, they might go further lengths;

and though their natural bent was generally towards ſuperſtition, yet ſome adventurers, as is ever the caſe, might ſteer for the oppoſite coaſt, and, as they advanced, might diſcover, that all religions, of what denominations or complexions ſoever, were alike:—that the religion of their own country in particular, was a contrivance of the Prieſts and Levites,——a phantom dreſſed out in a terrifying garb of their own making, to keep weak minds in fear:—that its rites and ceremonies, and numberleſs injunctions, were ſo many different wheels in the ſame political engine, put in, no doubt, to amuſe the ignorant, and keep them in ſuch a ſtate of darkneſs as clerical juggling requires.

That as for the moral part of it, though it was unexceptionable in itſelf,——yet it was a piece of intelligence they did not ſtand in want of: men had natural reaſon always to have found it out,——and wiſdom to have practiſed it, without Moſes's aſſiſtance.

Nay, poſſibly, in proceſs of time, they might arrive at greater improvements in religious controverſy;——when they had given their ſyſtem of infidelity all the ſtrength it could admit of from reaſon, they might begin to embelliſh it with ſome more ſprightly conceits and turns of ridicule.

Some wanton Iſraelite, when he had eaten and was full, might give free ſcope and indulgence to this talent: as arguments and ſober reaſoning failed, he might turn the edge of his wit againſt types and ſymbols, and treat all the myſteries of his religion,

and every thing that could be ſaid upon ſo ſerious a ſubject, with raillery and mirth: he might give vent to a world of pleaſantry upon many ſacred paſſages of his law: he might banter the golden calf, or the brazen ſerpent, with great courage,—and confound himſelf in the diſtinctions of clean and unclean beaſts, by the deſperate ſallies of his wit againſt them.

He could but poſſibly take one ſtep further: when the land which flowed with milk and honey had quite worn out the impreſſions of his yoke, and bleſſings began to multiply upon his hands, he might draw this curious concluſion, that there was no Being who was the author and beſtower of them,—but that it was their own arm, and the mightineſs of Iſraelitiſh ſtrength, which had put them, and kept them, in poſſeſſion of ſo much happineſs.——

O Moſes! How would thy meek and patient ſpirit have been put to the torture by ſuch a return? If a propenſity towards ſuperſtition in the Iſraelites, did once betray thee into ſuch an exceſs of anger, that thou threweſt the two tables out of thy hands, which GOD had wrote, and carleſsly hazardedſt the whole treaſure of the world,—with what indignation and honeſt anguiſh wouldſt thou have heard the ſcoffings of thoſe who denied the hand which brought them forth, and ſaid, Who is GOD, that we ſhould obey his voice?—With what force and vivacity wouldſt thou have reproached them with the hiſtory of their own nation?——that, if too free an enjoyment of GOD's bleſſings, had made them forget to look backwards,—it was neceſſary to remind them, that their

forefathers were Pharaoh's bondſmen in Egypt, without proſpect of deliverance: that the chains of their captivity had been fixed and rivetted by a ſucceſſion of four hundred and thirty years, without the interruption of one ſtruggle for their liberty: that after the expiration of that hopeleſs period, when no natural means favoured the event, they were ſnatched, almoſt againſt their own wills, out of the hands of their oppreſſors, and led through an ocean of dangers, to the poſſeſſion of a land of plenty: that this change in their affairs was not the produce of chance or fortune,—or was it projected or executed by any achievement or plan of human device, which might ſoon again be defeated by ſuperior ſtrength or policy from without, or from force of accidents from within, ——from change of circumſtances, humours, and paſſions of men, all which generally had a ſway in the riſe and fall of kingdoms,——but that all was brought about by the power and goodneſs of GOD, who ſaw and pitied the afflictions of a diſtreſſed people, and, by a chain of great and mighty deliverances, ſet them free from the yoke of oppreſſion.

That ſince that miraculous eſcape, a ſeries of ſucceſſes, not to be accounted for by ſecond cauſes and the natural courſe of events, had demonſtrated not only GOD's providence in general, but his particular providence and attachment to them——that nations greater and mightier than they were driven out before them, and their lands given to them for an everlaſting poſſeſſion.——

This was what they ſhould teach their children,

and their children's children after them. Happy generations, for whom ſo joyful a leſſon was prepared ?—happy indeed ! had ye at all times known to have made the uſe of it which Moſes continually exhorted,—*of drawing nigh unto God with all your hearts, who had been ſo nigh unto you.*

And here let us drop the argument, as it reſpects the Jews, and for a moment turn it towards ourſelves : the preſent occaſion, and the recollection which is natural upon it, of the many other parts of this complicated bleſſing vouchſafed to us ſince we became a nation, making it hard to deſiſt from ſuch an application.

I begin with the firſt in order of time, as well as the greateſt of national deliverances,—our deliverance from darkneſs and idolatry, by the conveyance of the light which Chriſtianity brought with it into Britain, ſo early as in the lifetime of the apoſtles themſelves, or, at fartheſt, not many years after their death.

Though this might ſeem a bleſſing conveyed and offered to us in common with other parts of the world, yet when you reflect upon this as a remote corner of the earth in reſpect of Judea,—its ſituation and inacceſſibleneſs as an iſland,—the little that was then known of navigation,——or carried on of commerce—the large tract of land which to this day remains unhallowed with the name of CHRIST, and almoſt in the neighbourhood of where the firſt glad-tidings of him were ſounded—one cannot but adore the goodneſs of GOD, and remark a more particular providence in its conveyance and eſtabliſhment here,

ıongſt other nations upon the continent,—— though the oppoſitions from error and preju- ·e equal, it had not theſe natural impediments ınter.

ırians and ſtateſmen, who generally ſearch here for the cauſes of events but in the plea- Him who diſpoſes of them, may make differ- ·ctions upon this. They may conſider it as incidental, brought to paſs by the fortuitous ı, ſucceſs, and ſettlement of the Romans : appearing that in Claudius's reign, when nity began to get footing in Rome, near houſand of that city and people were fixed in ıd: As this made a free communication be- ıe two places, the way for the goſpel was in ıpen, and its tranſition from the one to the atural and eaſy to be accounted for——and vertheleſs, providential. God often ſuffers rſue the devices of our hearts, whilſt he turns rſe of them, like the rivers of waters, to ıl purpoſes. Thus, he might make that pur- glory inherent in the Romans, the engine to his own, and eſtabliſh it here: he might ıe wickedneſs of the earth to work his own ıſneſs, by ſuffering them to wander a while their proper bounds, till his purpoſes were and *then put his hook into their noſtrils*, and ıſe wild beaſts of prey back again into their d.

to this bleſſing of the light of the Goſpel, we t forget that by which it was preſerved from

the danger of being totally ſmothered and diſtinguiſhed, by that vaſt ſwarm of barbarous nations, which came down upon us from the north, and ſhook the world like a tempeſt; changing names and cuſtoms, and language and government, and almoſt the very face of nature, wherever they fixed. That our religion ſhould be preſerved at all, when every thing elſe ſeemed to periſh, which was capable of change, ——or, that it ſhould not be hurt under that mighty weight of ruins, beyond the recovery of its former beauty and ſtrength,——the whole can be aſcribed to no cauſe ſo likely as this, That the ſame power of GOD which ſent it forth, was preſent to ſupport it—when the whole frame of other things gave way.

Next in degree to this mercy of preſerving Chriſtianity from an utter extinction——we muſt reckon that of being enabled to preſerve, and free it from corruptions, which the ruſt of time, the abuſes of men, and the natural tendency of all things to degeneracy, which are truſted to them, had from time to time introduced into it.

Since the day in which this reformation was begun, by how many ſtrange and critical turns has it been perfected and handed down, if not *entirely without ſpot or wrinkle*,—at leaſt, without great blotches or marks of anility!

Even the blow which was ſuffered to fall upon it ſhortly after, in that period where our hiſtory looks ſo unlike herſelf—ſtained, Mary, by thee! and diſfigured with blood:——can one reflect upon it, without adoring the Providence of GOD, which ſo

ſpeedily ſnatched the ſword of perſecution out of her hand,——making her reign as ſhort as it was mercileſs?

If GOD then made us as he did the Iſraelites, ſuck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock, how much more ſignal was his mercy in giving them to us without money, without price, in thoſe good days which followed, when a long and a wiſe reign was as neceſſary to build up our church, as a ſhort one was before to ſave it from ruins!

——The bleſſing was neceſſary——and it was granted——

GOD having multiplied the years of that renowned princeſs to an uncomon number, giving her time, as well as a heart, to fix a wavering perſecuted people, and ſettle them upon ſuch a foundation as muſt make them happy;—the touchſtone, by which *they* are to be tried, whom GOD has intruſted, with the care of kingdoms.

Bleſſed be thy glorious name for ever and ever, in making that teſt ſo much eaſier for the Britiſh, than other princes of this earth; whoſe ſubjects, whatever other changes they have felt, have ſeldom happened upon that of changing their miſery, and it is to be feared are never likely, ſo long as they are kept ſo ſtrongly bound in chains of darkneſs,——and chains of power.

From both theſe kinds of evils, which are almoſt naturally connected together, how providential was our eſcape in the ſucceeding reign, when all the